Issues of the Reformation

CORRECTING THE UPSIDE DOWN GOSPEL

and

Rescuing the Christian Mind from Wretched Subjectivism

B r o o k y R S t o c k t o n

Correcting the Upside Down Gospel 1.1

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Cruci Dum Spiro Fido

Preface

This work is for pastors, Bible students, and Christians with a heart to know the gospel and to teach it accurately. By revisiting the issues of the Reformation, this work hopes be a corrective to the modern upside down gospel.

When I was a young pastor and president of an Evangelical Fellowship, I discovered there was not much difference between Protestant Pastors and the Catholic Priests in their gospel theology; that these "Evangelical" preachers preached an upside down gospel related to Roman Catholicism; that all of were fuzzy in their theology on justification and regeneration except a Presbyterian and Evangelical Free pastor.

When I taught NT Theology in Seminary, I gave a test to students to see if they had a Biblical gospel or a Roman Catholic gospel. Sadly the majority had the same theology as the Council of Trent.

Moreover, these students needed to be delivered from wretched subjectivism so prevalent among the "spiritually" minded and super-religious among us. Moreover, they needed to think through the issues of the Reformation.

Consequently, this work is collection of simple sermons and recondite seminary notes designed to rescue the Christian mind from wretched subjectivism by focusing on Christ and His accomplishments at the cross – a focus contrary to the introspective, heart-minded, feeling-orientated Christian community.

May the Lord help you think through the issues that fueled the Reformation (*Sola Scriptura*, *Sola Fide*, *Solus Christus*, *Sola Gratia*, and *Sola Dei Gloria*) and to formulate a clear gospel in this age of discomposure. The eternal success of your ministry depends on it.

Cruci Dum Spiro Fido

Dr. Brooky Stockton, retired pastor and professor of Theology.

Dedication

This E-Book is dedicated to Marion Michaux of Colorado Springs who understood the gospel as well as any man. He was the greatest evangelist I've ever known. He once told me, "If you are not fishing, you are not following!" It stuck. and a church was born.

Blessed by the investment of others in my life,

Pastor Brook Stockton, Ph.D.

Acknowledgments

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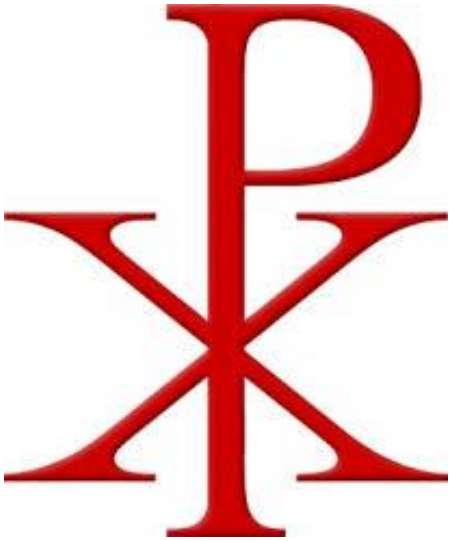
Issues of the Reformation

And,

Rescuing the Christian Mind from Wretched Subjectivism



By

Correcting the Upside Down Gospel with the Truth of the Cross

1. Problems Created by the Fall

Man's plunge into wretched subjectivism

Genesis 3

Figure 1: Unsplash
Andres Adodemer

Before us is the story of the fall. Let's read it again.

The Temptation

Genesis 3:4 And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:

Genesis 3:5 For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

The Fall

Genesis 3:6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

Note: Adam obeyed his wife who was deceived by the serpent – a reversal of God's plan (Genesis 3:16; 1 Timothy 2:14; Romans 5:12ff).

The Tragic Results

Genesis 3:7 And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

The number one problem created by the fall is death. The second is that sin infected men to their own corruption.

The word "naked" (*eyrom*) is not the same state as being nude. Nudity is not sin. The use of "naked" informs us of a change in the original couple from innocence to shame; from a state of shinning beauty to something grim. Death began its awful work.

The pronouns "them" and "they" are used four times in this text notifying us that the original couple was suddenly engaged in covering up their humiliation and creating a new gestalt using fig leaves for clothes. Things synthetic replaced the authentic.

Genesis 3:8 And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.

Genesis 3:9 And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?

Adam's Plunge into Wretched Subjectivism

Genesis 3:10 And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.

Adam used the pronoun "*I*" four times in his answer to God's question. Instead of being occupied with the wonder of the Creator, Adam is not lost in the jungle of wretched subjectivism.

The pronoun "*I*" is "*ego*" in Greek. We get the words "egotism," "egotistical" and "egoisms" from this term – a psychological expression of one who is totally subjective and self-centered. When people use the pronoun "*I*" excessively, it means the person is egotistically obsessed with one's self.

Subjectivism is the state of being totally pre-occupied with one's own thoughts, emotions, and actions. It is man's entrapment into the tensile of self-centeredness, self-occupation, and self-interest.

Subjectivism is a state where all of man's knowledge and interests are derived from his own experiences and feelings. He becomes his own criteria of right and wrong. In his mind, he is the measure of what other men ought to be.

"Got Questions.org" defines it as a philosophy:

> *"Subjectivism is the philosophical theory that there is no truth outside of one's own experience. It is contrasted with objectivism, which believes the opposite: that truth exists outside of experience and that, though we may not entirely understand that truth, it is there and it is absolute. "*

In this text the Spirit teaches us that man is no longer in search of God, but that God is in search of man. That man is not pre-occupied with the Creator, but chained to self-interest; that man is busy hiding himself from his Maker.

When people only talk about themselves and what they are doing, eating, wearing, shopping, and seeing, we call this "wretched subjectivism."

Man's interest in man is a spiritual affliction – an infirmity of which only the LORD God can deliver a man.

God's Remedy for the Fall and Man's Plunge into Wretched Subjectivism

Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

This verse is called “the first gospel” or the *protoevangelium*. It focused man’s hope on something outside of him – the coming Messiah.

The *protoevangelium* is the mother promise of all prophecy which contains the coming of the Messiah, the crushing of the anti-god forces of history, and the restoration of humanity from the toxicity of sin and the vortex of wretched subjectivism.

This is the objective gospel totally outside the experience of the individual man.

The "***I***" is God.

The "***thee***" is a reference to the serpent and the spirit behind the serpent, Satan himself. The woman is Eve, Israel, and Mary the mother of Christ all rolled into one.

"***Thy seed***" refers to evil men, the anti-God, anti-Logos, anti-Christ forces and all its political forms that arise during history. The "seed" of the serpent is "Cain," "Nimrod," Babylon, Jezebel, Athaliah, Assyria, Rome and its scorpion children. "Her seed" is the Son of God, the son of Mary, the Christ-child, the Logos of the Greeks and the Messiah of Israel.

The term "***bruise***" refers to injury, wounds, and a crushing defeat. Before us is the imagery of man crushing the head of the serpent with his foot. God is telling us that a Champion will be born among men, the seed of a woman, who will smash Satan, reverse the effects of eating the fruit from the Poisonous Tree, and cleanse the planet of evil.

The phrase "***thou shall bruise his feet***" is a reference to an injurious, serpent-smashing Champion will be wounded in the confrontation between good and evil. We know this Champion as Christ, and the wounds he received at the cross.

All of prophecy is about the conflict between sin and righteousness, good and evil, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness, Christ and Satan, sin and righteousness, love and hate, God's children and the Devil's seed, true Israel and the anti-God forces.

All prophecy tells one truth: the wicked will be crushed and destroyed and God's children will be saved by the woman's Seed, the Prince of Peace, the Son of God, and the Arm of the Lord, the Messiah of Israel, and the Christ of God. This is the *protoevangelium*, the first Gospel! – a faith seeks salvation in Another.

The Missing Vav and the Messiah

There is a missing letter that makes up the word "generations" (toldot) (**תולדות**) in Genesis 5 that is significant. The Hebrew Vav look like this (ו) an it is the sixth letter in the Hebrew alphabet -- a letter believed by rabbis to symbolize man (ו).

Look at the word "generations" (toldot) (תולדות) before the fall --

Genesis 2:4 These are the generations (toldot) (תולדות) of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens,

But Adam sinned in Genesis 3 which is called "the fall of man."

Look at the word "***generations***" (*toldot*) (**תולדות**) after the fall. It is missing the Vav in every text:

Genesis 5:1 1 This is the book of the generations (toldot) (תולדת) of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him. (Note the missing Vav (ו).

Genesis 6:9 These are the generations (toldot) (תולדת) of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations (toldot) (תולדת) , and Noah walked with God.

Look at Ruth 4:18 where the Vav is RESTORED:

Ruth 4:18 Now these are the generations (תולדות) of Pharez: Pharez begat Hezron,

The name "***Perez***′ means "*breach*" (from *paratz*, meaning "to break through." God broke through to the families of mankind in order to restore creation (Paradise) in and through His Son - - through Perez . . . David . . . Jesus, the obedient Son!! Think first Adam and last Adam. Jesus is the Vav (man) that restores humanity in and through his passion at the cross.

2. The Most Important Question

in the Bible

". . . how should man be just with God?" - Job 9:2

The modern mind trapped in wretched subjectivism is glued to "self-esteem," "self-realization," "self-fulfillment," and all the other selfisms.

But, the 16th century mind was concerned about how a man could be right with God. Thus, the Reformation was a "back to the Bible Movement" occupied with answering the question of how a wretched man trapped in sin could have a right standing with his Creator.

At the zenith of the 16th century, all of Europe was infested with wretched religious subjectivism: indulgences, prayer, fasting, penance, self-flagellation, personal deprivations, and private punishments. It was a mark of spirituality to crawl on one's knees up a hill to a cross, to beat one's self with leather whips, seclude one's self in a desert cave, to wear ashes, and to say the Rosary 10 times a day.

With the invention of the Gutenberg printing press in 1440, Europeans had access to the teaching of the Bible. The contrast between the Biblical truth and Roman Catholicism stunned church attendants. A back to the Bible Movement was born and the result was reformation.

The word "reformation" refers to a change in thinking, an awakening to truth, a return to Biblical doctrine.

Thus, the 16th century mind became occupied with how a man could know God and be restored to Him. But, in pursuit of this buried truth the innocent individual found Himself facing the crushing power of the papacy and an entrenched ecclesiastical monolith.

Q: How can a man find a right standing in the eyes of Almighty God?

A: This short answer is by believing the Gospel of Christ (Romans 1:16).

> *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."*

When European minds grasped the gospel, they were wonderfully delivered from the power of sin and the vortex of wretched subjectivism.

The Roman Catholic Church hated this new spirit of freedom, and initiated a counter-reformation – a refined movement that ended up binding men again to religious subjectivism . . . but, this time it was much more subtle and sophisticated; that is, the chains of subjectivism was hidden behind Biblical terms – terms with spurious definitions that fettered the religious mind to wretched subjectivism.

The Roman Catholics argued that a man had to be born again and change to be right with God.

> *John 3:3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

The Reformers found the answer at the cross:

> *Ephesians 2:16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the **cross**, having slain the enmity thereby:*
>
> *Colossians 1:20 And, having made peace through the blood of his **cross**, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.*
>
> *Colossians 2:14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his **cross**;*

The Reformers did **not** deny that men needed to be born again; ***they refused to make regeneration the basis of justification.***

Thus, this work is about the Reformed doctrine of justification by faith, by blood, and by grace as opposed to religious subjectivism.

It has been said that to detect a counterfeit dollar bill a bank clerk must practice shuffling new dollars bills so that can feel the different between the true and the false.

The same is true when it comes to theology. To detect a *fake religion* from a *true religion* one must study true religion. In this case, one must study the true Gospel so they can recognize the upside down gospel.

3. Seven Titles of the Gospel

To believe the gospel, you must know the gospel.

Mark 1:15

"And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel." - Mark 1:15

How do you become a Christian? The correct answer is by believing the gospel.

But, if you do not know the gospel, how can you believe it? If you do not believe the gospel, how can you be saved from the judgment to come (Hebrews 9:27)?

This is written so that you might know and believe the gospel, and thus, become a true child of God. The gospel is **not** a country song. The gospel is **not** the Bible. The gospel is **not** about how "we should love one another."

The noun ***gospel*** (*euangelion*) means "*good news*." Think of it as the essential content of the early Christian message. It can be defined and identified in the New Testament.

The verb *euangelizo* is used 55 times in the New Testament and it means "*to bring good news"* or "*to announce glad tidings."*

The noun *evangelist* is used 33 times and it describes the one who preaches the message of the gospel.

Today the gospel competes with many wild and extreme forms of thought. Have you have heard the term, "*dumbing down of the church?"* This refers to simplistic sermons in the pulpit, which produce feel-goody Christians. Have you heard of the "*psychologizatio*n of the church?" This refers to the integration of psychology with the gospel. Have you heard of the word "cult?"

This term refers to those who distort the gospel by focusing on some tangential subject. Our culture is tossed about by the crosscurrent of ideas, and it is essential that we sail our ship into the harbor of the gospel on a clear day.

James Stewart, a gospel preacher, recognized Seven Scriptural Titles associated with the Greek word *euangelion* that are worth recording.

THE EUANGELION OF GOD

Romans 1:1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God. . .

The word *euangelion* is a message from God that has its roots in the history of His Son.

The title "***gospel of God***" speaks of **the origin** of the message. It is **not** from man. Early Christians did not make it up. It is **not** a myth, and it did **not** evolve from early Christian folklore. The gospel is from God the Father. The gospel is His revelation and it is here because of His sovereign decree.

Have you heard about the dial-a-prayer for atheists? You dial the number and nobody answers. The Bible tells us something different. He has a telephone number and it is JER 333. "*Call unto me, and I will answer thee . . .*" (Jeremiah 33:3).

The title "***gospel of God***" not only tells us *the genesis* of the message, but it announces **the good news of God's existence**. It tells us that there is one, personal, infinite, virtuous, triune Spirit who desires to be a redemptive Father, and Who has sent His one and only Son to be the Savior for sinners (Matthew 1:21). The good news is that there is a God who hears and cares. He is YHWH, the Great "*I AM THAT I AM,"* the covenant keeping God who is, was, and shall be.

The title "***gospel of God***" not only announces the origin of the gospel and the good news of God's Being, it also proclaims the rule of God. It declares that God is sovereign and is acting in history. He reigns now (Psalm 97)!

THE EUANGELION OF CHRIST

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes.

The title "***gospel of Christ***" speaks about **the theme** of the message.

The gospel is about the person of Christ. It is good news that Jesus is God's Son, the God-man, one in person, co-equal with the Father. Some have lost sight of who Christ really is. Ideas like, "Jesus was a good man," or that "Jesus was created," or that "He is one of many religious teachers," or that "He was an inspiring religious leader" *injure the truth about Christ*.

In the early church, heretics tended to deny the humanity of Christ (1 John 4:1-4). Today, cults tend to deny the deity of Christ, His virgin birth, and His resurrection.

Christians understand Jesus to be the God-man, truly God and truly man. John reveals Him as the "Word" (Logos).

> *John 1:1 In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with Theos, and the Logos was Theos.*
>
> *John 1:1* VEn avrch/| h=n o` lo,goj( kai. o` lo,goj h=n pro.j to.n qeo,n(kai. qeo.j h=n o` lo,gojÅ

In the Greek language, Christ's deity is very clear. The Greek letter "o`" (ho) is a definite article indicating the subject (nominative) of the sentence. It should be read this way: "*The Word was God."* The Greek word "*logos*" does not have an article because it is the predicate nominative.

The official title of the Savior is "*The Lord Jesus Christ."* His name "Jesus" is his human name and it is used 608 times before his ascension, but it is used only 62 times after his ascension.

The title "*The Lord Jesus Christ*" is never mentioned before he ascended, but it is used 81 times after His ascension.

When first century men recognized the supreme state of Christ's exaltation, they were cut to the heart and surrendered to Him as Lord and Master. He is Lord and **not** autonomous man. He is Lord, **not** Caesar. He is Lord, **not** the state! This truth gave the NT Christians the power to resist Rome and its arrogance in claiming that Augustus was some type of god. Thus, when Peter declared that Jesus is Lord and that there was **no** other Name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved, he declared war on the Roman Empire (Acts 4:12). It was this gospel that our Lord was King that turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6-7).

The issue is **not** whether Jesus is Lord, but will men recognize Him as such! When was the last time you heard his official title in the media, "The Lord Jesus Christ?" Oh, that men would repent of the blasphemy and begin confessing him as Lord.

Furthermore, the gospel is not only about the person of Christ, it is about the history of Christ.

Religion is about man's fundamental problem. Man's fundamental problem is death. Religion, therefore, is any philosophy or belief about death. Can death be overcome? That is the question of the ages.

The "*good news*" is that Christ died, was buried, and rose again (1 Corinthians 15:1-12).

It is not good news when someone dies, but in the case of Christ, it is gospel. If he had not truly died, he could not have risen from the dead to demonstrate his victory and power over death. Jesus died. His body was placed in a grave. Over the next few weeks, over 500 witnesses saw him alive. He literally, tangibly, physically, bodily rose from the grave. This is good news! Christ defeated death. And, He solved man's fundamental problem. If Christ has power over death, He has power to resolve our fundamental problem regarding death. Why go to Mohammed or Buddha? They are still in the grave. Why run to psychologists? They can't save your soul. Only a living resurrected Christ can impart life.

Not only does the gospel tell us about the person of Christ and his victorious history, it tells us the meaning of that history. When a person dies, their death has little historical significance other than they are deceased. Christ's death was different. His death thunders with meaning. The terms "*redemption*," "*grace*," "*propitiation*," and "*justification*" are a few of the NT words that tell us how the death of Christ is to be interpreted.

Take the word "*redemption*" for example: His death was redemptive. The word "***redemption***" (*apolutrosis*) means "to set free" or "to release." Christ died as a substitute for sinners. Because He paid the penalty for your sins, you can be "*set free*" from the guilt, shame, and penalty of sin. And, this is good new!

THE GLORIOUS EUANGELION OF CHRIST

2 Corinthians 4:3, 4 The God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

The title "***glorious gospel***" refers to **the intrinsic worth of the message**. It is glorious because it presents the majesty and glory of the Redeemer. Glory is to Christ what a light is to a lamp. Glory is the brilliance and beauty of His person. The glorious gospel reveals the pre-existent Son who shared the glory of the Father and laid aside his radiance, not his deity, to become a man. He was not only a man, He was a humble servant to men (John 17:5; Philippians 2:6ff).

The glorious gospel reveals the hidden glory of Christ disclosed while He was on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1). It displays the glory of the ascended Christ in his official capacity as sovereign Lord (Revelations 1:12ff). It reveals that when believers receive eternal life (John 3:16), they are given the glory of God to shine in their hearts to change the inner man (2 Corinthians 4:6; John. 17:22). Their bodies will be changed and made like His glorious body at His coming (1 Corinthians. 6:20; 15:51; 1 John 3:2, 3). For this reasons it is called a "***glorious gospel!"***

THE EUANGELION OF THE GRACE OF GOD

Acts 20:24 I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

The title "gospel of grace" describes **the character of the gospel**. It is the gospel of mercy and undeserved kindness.

Two aged saints were sitting in a rest home when a gentleman wandered by and asked them to describe salvation. One replied, "Something for nothing." "Yes," replied the other, "but it is even better than that. It is everything for nothing."

To understand grace you must understand depravity. Man's depravity makes grace necessary. The sinner is like a leopard that cannot change his spots. Like dandruff, we all have it. Like sheep with parasites, we must all be dipped and cleansed. Cleansing comes by the blood of Christ. Man cannot save himself, nor can his salvation be bought or earned. Man cannot be bought with silver and gold. The price of redemption is blood. Blood is the currency of the spirit world, and our Lord graciously paid the price so we could be free from the penalty of sin.

The gospel is **not** about what we need to do for God, but ***about what God has done for us through Christ***.

God sent His Son to pay for our sin. It is because He died as our substitute that we can be cleansed and forgiven. Salvation is a gift of grace to believing men.

In Exodus 20:24, right after YHWH gave the Ten Commandments, He described the altar on which Israel was to offer sacrifices to Him. The altar could not be made from cut stones, nor could it have steps ascending up to it. The lesson is clear! Man cannot ascend to God on the basis his own merit. Man's efforts are not acceptable on God's altar. God planned the sacrifice. And by grace, He has done it all that is necessary for our salvation by offering Christ as our sacrificial Lamb on Calvary's altar.

Harry Ironside was once asked how he could know the truth with so many religions on earth. He responded that there were only two religions: ***Do and Done***. Which one do we follow?

THE EUANGELION OF YOUR SALVATION

Ephesians 1:13 And you were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.

The title "gospel of your salvation" speaks of **the marvelous effects of the gospel**. It saves souls from condemnation and judgment. It redeems, justifies, and reconciles one to God (Romans 5:1ff).

It also addresses the response required. It is the gospel of your salvation. No man is born a Christian. Even though he may be taught about Christ as a child, there is a point in time when the man is called to personally receive Christ as his Lord and Savior. Conversion is **not** a process. Like birth, there is a day of salvation (John 3:3). Prayer does **not** convert a soul. Faith in Christ saves the man (Ephesians 2:8, 9). Salvation happens when one hears the facts of the gospel and believes the message (Romans 10:17). It is **not** something one has to earn (Titus 3:5). It is a gift that is received by faith (Acts 20:21). And that gift will not be taken away (Romans 11:29). When one places his faith in (*en*) into (e*is*) or (*epi*) upon Christ, he receives forgiveness of sins. This is good news (Acts 13:38).

Spurgeon use to say, "*Never put a question mark where God has put a period.*" Have we come to a place in our life where we have placed our faith in Christ, and accepted His work on our behalf? This is personal possession that leads to salvation.

THE EUANGELION OF PEACE

Ephesians 6:15 Stand . . . with your feet shod. . . with the gospel of peace.

Peace is a fruit of the gospel. One receives peace with God on the grounds of the gospel: the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. To appreciate peace

one must understand the war. When Henry Thoreau, the naturalist, was near death, a friend asked him, "Henry, have you made peace with God?" His arrogant reply was, "I didn't know that we had ever quarreled."

Man's war with the Creator is just as profound as the CIA's war with the Colombian drug bosses.

There is peace available in the gospel. But it has to be on God's terms, not on man's terms. God's judgment on sin at Calvary makes it possible for Him to extend to men a treaty of peace, but each man, an enemy, must embrace the Son . . .must accept the offer . . . and when he does, he gains peace with God (Psalm 2:12).

Don Richardson brought to life a vivid illustration of this in his book Peace Child. Peace could only be attained between warring Sawi Tribes if the head of the tribe would give his son to the enemy to raise. When the son was given, the opposition tribe knew the chief meant business. Each tribe member was required to touch the child. This was their way of confirming a commitment to a covenant of peace. If you want peace God, you must touch the Son by faith (Matthew 11:28, 29; John 6:53).

There is, however, a difference between "*peace with God*," and possessing the "*peace of God."* The first is a fact resting on the finished work of Christ; the second is experienced by faith in the fact.

MY EUANGELION

Romans 2:16 This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.

Did you notice the phrase, "my gospel"? The term refers to **one's personal ownership of the gospel**. It is not until God's gospel becomes ***my gospel*** that the world will know of the Savior. We must not only take possession of the gospel for our own salvation, we must embrace it as our life message. We must come to see ourselves as a steward committed with a sacred trust–a trust we must guard as well as dispense.

Paul termed it "***my gospel***;" - not that he had degraded it by his personal eccentricities or diverted it by selfish appropriation, **but** the gospel was put into the heart and lifeblood of Paul as a personal trust to be executed by his Pauline traits, to be set aflame and empowered by the fiery energy of his fiery soul. Paul's sermons — what were they? Where are they? Skeletons, scattered fragments, afloat on the sea of inspiration! But the man Paul, greater than his sermons, lives forever, in full form, feature and stature, with his molding hand on the Church. The preaching is but a voice. The voice in silence dies, the text is forgotten, the sermon fades from memory; the preacher lives. (EM Bounds)

Back in the old days of small business, the word "*sons*" was stenciled on storefronts: "Fleming & Sons;" "Johnson & Sons;" "Blackwell & Sons." When sons entered their father's business and assumed responsibility, they shared the title. Can you say with the apostle Paul that you are "God's fellow worker" (2 Corinthians 6:1)? Do you have the sense you are in business with Christ? Paul did!

In his book, Angola Beloved, T. Earnest Wilson tells of a Chilonda Elder who as a young convert tried for months to tell the elders the gospel story every evening at the camp fire. But night after night the tribal leaders rebuffed him. One night the opportunity came, and he told this story.

There was a drought in the land and all the animals came together to discuss where they could find water. The turtle came forward and said he knew, but the lion cuffed the turtle with his paw and said that he knew a place from which he used to drink as a cub. They all followed the lion, but when they arrived there was no water. But the turtle stepped forward again and said, "I know where there is water." This time, the elephant rebuked him, and they all followed the elephant to his ancient water hole. But when they arrived it was a cracked dry riverbed. One after another, from the monkey to the rabbit, they all had their turn to try and lead the animals to water. Lastly, the turtle stepped forward and said, "I know where there is water." Very thirsty, they followed the turtle. He led them to a rock and nearby was an artesian spring.

Sanji ended his illustration with the obvious application: "We have been following you elders for a long time among the dark paths of witchcraft and fear and death and we are thirsty still, but I know where there is living water!"

Sanji told them the gospel story.

The gospel of Christ is living water. Will you drink deeply from the well of the gospel? It is the water of life that can save your soul. Believe the gospel and make it your message.

Source: Stockton, Five Pillars of the Gospel, a Nike Publication.

4. The Upside Down Gospel Among Us

Perverting the Gospel –

A Modern Day Return to Roman Catholicism

Galatians 1:6

"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ . . . " – Galatians 1:6.

I was driving down I-40, when I saw red lights flashing.

In the middle of the highway was a car turned upside down. Cars slowed to a crawl and alarm filled hearts as everyone intuitively knew something terrible had happened.

Later that morning I heard a radio preacher say, "You have got to be born again to be saved. God will not take you to heaven unless you change." As the preacher preached his message of change, I wondered to myself how many Christians were alarmed by this upside down gospel. His message was all about what man must do to be right with God and nothing about what God has done at the cross to free men from sin.

This man preached wretched subjectivism from the pulpit – an upside down gospel.

What is an upside down gospel?

We turn the Gospel upside down when we preach regeneration before justification.

Whenever we preach the new birth before we preach Christ crucified, we turn the gospel upside down. There is no command "to be born again." The gospel is **not** that you must be born again or that you must experience heart transformation before you can be saved.

Our gospel is **not** "go change yourself" so you can be saved.

Our gospel is **not** "you must change," but that Christ died for your sins! Whenever we preach "you must" before "Christ did," we reverse the order of salvation.

It is Christ's work at Calvary that justifies the sinner, **not** the work of the Holy Spirit in us that justifies the sinner.

While we do not deny that a person "must be born again," we refuse to accept regeneration as the basis of acceptance.

The gospel is **not** about us! It all about what Christ did outside of us. It is less about what He does inside of us.

While the gospel does transform the sinner, transformation is **not** the basis of justification. The basis of justification is the fact that Christ exchanged his righteousness for our sins. Clear gospel preaching proclaims a crucified Savior first (John 3:14-15), and a transformed heart second. It was the reversal of this order that ignited the fires of the Reformation.

We turn the Gospel upside down when we preach that justification means "to make righteous" instead of "to declare righteous."

Justification is **not** both a "creation" and a "declaration." God does **not** make a person righteous, and then declare him righteous. He does **not** first make a person holy, and then declare him holy.

Justification is a forensic term meaning "***to declare righteous***" (Deuteronomy 25:1). The court does **not** "make people righteous," it declares them righteous. When the tax collectors in Luke 7:29 "justified God" they did not make Him just, they declared him just. Paul announced that God justifies the "ungodly," not the godly (Romans 4:5).

When we preach that justification means "to make righteous," we exchange "objective justification" for "subjective sanctification;" *salvation at the cross* for *salvation within the heart.*

When we make justification dependent on something taking place inside man, we make acceptance before God dependent on sanctification.

Justification is **not** determined by the degree of holy development in the heart. Justification is made possible because a holy Christ obeyed God's holy law perfectly and then died for our unholiness on the cross.

We turn the Gospel upside down when we preach "you must ask Christ into your heart" rather than "you must believe in Him."

Christians will often tell a pagan that, "You must invite Christ into your heart to be saved." Is this correct gospel kerygma (proclamation)?

The phrase, "*Christ in the heart*," is a Catholic phrase, **not** a biblical one. When the Rich Young Ruler came to Christ and asked, "What must I do to have eternal life (Matthew 19:16ff)?" Jesus did **not** say, "You must invite me into your heart?"

When John said, "*As many as received him*," he was **not** talking about receiving Christ in the heart, but receiving Christ for Who He claimed to be—the Logos (1:1), the Son of God (1:34), the Lamb of God (1:29), the King of Israel (1:49). "He came unto his own (the Jews), but His own did not receive Him for who He claimed to be (John 1:10).

When Paul mentioned "*Christ among you*" the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27), he was **not** addressing individual hearts but the corporate church. The word

"***you***" (even gummi/n) is a plural pronoun. That is, Paul saw the hope of Christ at work among the Colossians.

When Paul said, "*Christ lives in me*" (Galatians 2:20) he was **not** saying that Christ lived in him as a divine Person.

It is true that the hope of Christ lives in us, and the Spirit of Christ lives in us, but it is **not** true that Christ live in us as a divine Person. Christ rose from the grave and ascended to the right hand of God to take His place as Lord and Christ (Acts 2:25-37).

Q: What happened to Christ's body after he rose from the grave? Did his resurrected body dissipate like a cloud to be absorbed by receptive hearts?

We do not object to using the phrase "Invite Christ into your heart," if you mean by it *a decision to accept Christ as Lord of your life* -- to reorganize your gestalt around the authority of Christ -- to accept the gospel as truth in your mind and heart.

But, if you insist that you must have Christ as a divine Person living in your heart in order to change for the better *then you have turned the gospel upside down*. This is Roman Catholic Theology, not Biblical Theology.

The great call of the gospel is **not** to receive Christ into your heart, but to believe on him -- the one who died for you at Calvary.

The word "*believe*" is used 91 times in John and faith is the fundamental response called for by the apostle -- faith in the doing and dying of Christ.

We turn the Gospel upside down when we preach an indwelling Christ rather than Christ crucified.

Can a resurrected Christ as a divine Person live in our hearts? Did the disciples go through out the Roman world telling men to invite Christ into their hearts, or . . . did they go throughout the world and preach the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-12)?

Even if Christ as a divine Person could live in our hearts, it is not the indwelling Christ that saves us. It is Christ crucified that saves us! After Christ died, He sat down at the right hand of God (Acts 2:35-37). From that position as Lord and Christ, He mediates the Spirit to those who believe. It is the Spirit of God that indwells men, **not** the resurrected Christ.

When we exchange an objective Christ for an indwelling Christ, the emphasis shifts **from** what God did for us at Calvary **to** what He must do within us spiritually. And, while God does seek to conform believers to the image of the Son, the degree of conformity to the Savior's character is **not** the "good news" of the gospel.

The "*good news*" is **not** about what God wants to do in us. Rather, the gospel is about what God did outside of us and for us at Calvary.

We turn the Gospel upside down when we preach grace in the heart rather than grace at Calvary.

The Council of Trent in its Canons on Justification taught that a person is saved by grace. By grace, **Rome** meant the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart. However, the heart is **not** the fundamental locus of grace.

Paul identifies the locus of grace when he says, "*Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:"* (Romans 3:24). God's grace is the gift of His Son and His work of redemption **at Calvary** (Ephesians 1:7). Grace is primarily an historical event. The issue is not that we do not need grace to live day by day. It is a matter of understanding that when we preach *grace for change* instead of *grace in the great exchange* (Calvary), we turn the gospel upside down.

By placing the locus of God's salvic work in the heart instead of at Calvary, we turn the gospel upside down. Justification is something that happens outside of us, not something that happens inside of us.

We turn the gospel upside down when we say a man is saved by faith in the heart rather than by works in conformity to law.

Sometimes we are so anxious to let the sinner know that he is not saved by his own efforts, we unintentionally truncate the gospel. It is true that a man's own works do not save him. **But, it is not true that a man is not saved by works**.

In saving men, God did not compromise his justice or mitigate his demands:

> *"Who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness" (Psalm 15:1); "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20); It is not the hearers of the law that are justified, "but the doers of the law" that are justified (Romans 2:13).*

Christ was a Hebrew born under the law. He kept the Torah from beginning to end, from first to last. Because He was obedient unto death, and because He was justified by the Spirit, we can say He was justified by His own works (Philippians 2:5-12; 1 Timothy 3:16).

When we believe, righteousness is **credited** to us (Romans 4:5).

But, where does this righteousness come from? Does it come out of thin air? Is it created within us by the Spirit? Is faith a substitute for substantial righteousness? None of these are true.

When we believe, God justifies us; that is, *God credits the righteousness of Christ to our account* -- earned righteousness, works in conformity to law. This righteousness comes from "Christ's faithfulness" which is His obedience to the law.

The phrase "*faith in Christ*" in Romans 3:22 is a subjective genitive meaning "***faithfulness of Christ***." It is His faithfulness that is credited to those who believe.

While it is correct to say "*We are not saved by our own works,"* it is not accurate for us to say, "*We are not saved by works*." **We are saved by works -- His works!** The ***doing*** and ***dying*** of Christ saves a man. Because Christ obeyed the law for us and then credits His righteousness to our account neither justice nor law was compromised.

We turn the gospel upside down when we teach that faith is a substitute for righteousness.

The good news of the gospel is ***not*** that God compromised his justice and now accepts faith as a substitute for righteousness.

Faith is **not** a virtue at work in the heart. God does **not** look inside our hearts and see "faith" and then decide to save us.

Faith is a confidence that Christ obeyed the law for us . . . that He died for our sins . . . that He credits His righteousness to our account.

As our Representative, He kept the law for us. When we believe, God gives to us the very righteousness of Christ. This is not synthetic righteousness, but actual works in conformity to law kind of righteousness. God now accepts us because we have real righteousness, Christ's righteousness. Paul could say, "I live" because of Christ's faithfulness (a subjective genitive) (Galatians 2:20).

We turn the gospel upside down when we teach a man is saved by faith plus works.

Based on James 2:12ff and Galatians 5:6, Rome taught that a man could **not** be *justified without faith and charity.* To Rome, faith was a virtue that gave birth to good deeds. In other words, Rome taught God justifies a man after charity sprouts from the seed of faith. But, we must ask, "How much charity is needed?" This was Rome's dilemma.

There are four phrases connected to justification:

- a man is justified by grace (Romans 3:24),
- by blood (Romans 5:9),
- by faith (Romans 3:28) and,
- by works (James 2:21-25) which is evidence of faith in the eyes of men.

Grace is the **motive** of man's justification (God to man);

Blood is the **basis** of justification (God with God);

Faith is the **means** of receiving justification (man's response to God); and

Works is the **fruit** of justification (man before man).

In Romans, Paul is in God's courtroom, and he is answering the question, "***How can a man be just before God?"*** The **answer** is faith in Christ's faithfulness.

In James, James is in man's courtroom and he addresses the question, "How can a man be justified before men?" Since men cannot see faith, the answer lies in a man's works—something they can see. James is not arguing, "Show God your faith by your works," but "show me" your faith by your works. [Note: in James we have an argument and James employs the voice of the objector to advance the truth.]

Rome never could separate sanctification from justification; creation from declaration; or faith from works in relation to God.

To Rome, salvation has always been *faith plus something*; that is, *faith plus charity*.

The cry of the reformation was ***sola fide*** (faith alone). By ***sola fide*** the Reformers meant a man is justified before God by his confidence (faith) in the doing and dying of Christ. It was faith plus nothing!

The Reformers did **not** deny that true faith produces charity; they simply refused to let charity become the basis of man's justification before God.

We turn the gospel upside down when we preach substitution for sanctification instead of substitution for justification.

Whenever we preach a person needs Christ's help to change so he can please God, we are no longer preaching true substitution. When we preach the key to victory is *to let Christ live out his life through us*, we are preaching substitutionary sanctification as a means to be right with God.

The gospel is "*Christ died for our sins*." The word "***for***" means "*in place of*."

Christ's death on Calvary was a substitutionary death; i.e., He died in our stead. We can add **nothing** to this work. Faith accepts the fact that Christ did all that was necessary to save us from wrath by His death on the cross. When we preach that we need Christ to help us to do good so we can be accepted before God (justification), we turn the gospel upside down.

Furthermore, when we teach *substitutionary sanctification*, i.e., that holiness can only be obtained by "letting go, and letting God," or "letting Christ live out His life through us," or "living the exchanged life," we frustrate sanctification.

While justification is all about substitution, sanctification has nothing to do with substitution. J

Justification is all about what Jesus did while we were yet sinners. Sanctification is all about our cooperation with the Holy Spirit.

Justification is God's effort to save us; Sanctification is our effort to please God.

When we teach that sanctification has something to do with substitution, we absolve the believer of any responsibility to be holy. We turn the gospel upside down (1 Thessalonians 4:3; 1 Peter 1:15-17).

We turn the gospel upside down when we teach that grace is the opposite of law.

The opposite of law is not grace, but lawlessness; the opposite of grace is not law, but a system of rewards.

The gospel does not save a man from law, but equips a man to keep the law, not for salvation, but for sanctification:

> *Romans 8:4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*
>
> *Romans 13:8 Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.*
>
> *1 John 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.*

We are saved by the doing and dying of Christ when we believe (justification); then we are transformed in the inner man by faith (regeneration); and, as we grow by faith, we become more holy and loving (sanctification); and, love as well as righteousness is a defined by acts in conformity with law which is the obedience of the saints.

Summary: Just as an upside down car means tragedy, an upside down gospel creates tragedies.

The correct gospel leads souls to heaven, but an upside down gospel traps people into wretched subjectivism.

A correct gospel proclaims a crucified-risen Christ, not an indwelling Christ; justification first and regeneration second; an extrinsic gospel, not an intrinsic gospel; Christ on the cross, not Christ in the heart; faith alone, not faith plus charity.; not love without law, but love in conformity to law.

When we have a man-centered message instead of a Christ-centered message, we turn the gospel upside down. We bind men to introspection and wretched subjectivism.

The gospel that Christ is the Savior of the world is the message of the church; that Christ is King of kings and purges out evil among men through the state is the product of a proper understanding of Old Testament law and the purpose of government.

God's law was not given as a means of salvation, but as a means for a civil society to purge out evil among men.

It is the gospel that saves men from sin; and it is the execution of righteousness that saves society from the corruption of sin.

Just as law does not save the sinner, neither does the multiplication of laws by the State save the public. But, a proper, limited application of law by the State does purge out evil and produce fear in society; and, a proper application of law in the Christian life will produce a life of love for the benefit of neighbors and friends. Isn't this correct?]

5. The Gospel Under Attack

Figure 2: Unsplash

"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: 7Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. 8But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. 9As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." – Galatians 1:6-7

In their day, the Reformers were

able to deliver much of Europe from the fetters of religious, wretched subjectivism because they went back to the Bible to study the true gospel.

Simpletons attack the authority of Scripture and are cursed (anathema).

The cults attack the Person of Christ and are cursed (anathema).

Unreasonable scientists, humanists, and bias historians attack the history of Christ and are cursed (anathema).

The Catholics and Armenian Protestants undermine the meaning and effects of Christ's work on the cross. Creating an upside down gospel results in a curse (anathema). So powerful is Armenianism the secularists have exalted human choice to that of a deity even accepting the insane view that boys and girls can chose their gender.

Antinomians are at odds with the law, NT commands, and rules necessary for an orderly life. This division of law and grace has reinforced permissiveness in our age. It has its own curse (anathema).

Secular and "Christian" psychologists adopt views of man that are contrary the Christian view of man and the Biblical remedy for man's problems and are cursed (anathema).

Liberal Protestants and Omnists deny the authority of Scripture and attack the exclusive claims of Christ and are cursed (anathema).

Zionist Christians have developed a perverted view of the gospel hope to the point that Zionists support the genocide of Palestinians in Israel by so called "Jews" and are cursed (anathema).

Religious, wretched subjectivism has come out its pit again and is operating in so called "churches" (501 c 3 religious organizations) to enslave millions of Americans.

Consequently, God's people need to rethink the Christian gospel and define it correctly lest they fall under the curse (anathema).

This work focuses on the rise of Armenianism among liberal Protestants, Roman Catholics, and Charismatics with their assault on the fundamentals of the gospel so we won't be under the curse (anathema).

It is important to be as accurate as we can and to surrender ourselves to Biblical truth -- "*men perform according to their theology whether it be right or wrong*."

6. The Five Pillars of the Gospel

The New Testament Kerygma

Romans 1:16

2 Timothy 2:2 And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

In Paul's last correspondence with Timothy, he told Timothy to major on discipleship. Four generations are in view: Paul, Timothy, faithful men, and others. We might classify the people as new converts, disciples, disciple-makers, and servant leaders. He wanted Timothy to pass on "the things" he had learned to faithful men who would in turn pass them on to faithful men. But, what are "the things" Paul had in mind to pass on?

Backing up into chapter one, we learn "***the things***" were called "***that good thing***" (1:14), "***sound words***" (1:13), and "***the gospel***" (1:8, 10). Paul commissioned Timothy with the responsibility of passing on the gospel intact to the next generation. Thus, we must consider the Prophets, the Apostles, and Church Fathers.

The gospel baton has now been passed to us (modern Christians), and it is our responsibility to hand it off to the next generation without dropping it in the exchange. God is not asking us to pass on personal opinions, favorite doctrines, or "seven habits of highly effective people." He is asking us to pass on the gospel intact, unblemished, unbroken, uncut, undefiled, unharmed, unhurt, unimpaired, uninjured, unmarred, unscathed, untouched, unviolated, and whole to the next generation.

But, what is the gospel? If we do not have a complete understanding of the gospel, how can we pass it on to others? Much of discipleship is like passing on a third of a deck cards and expecting people to enjoy the game.

Ask a person on the street, "What is the gospel?" and you will receive answers like the following: "It is a country song," or, "It is how we ought to love one another," or "It is the Bible."

Theologians have tried to organize their biblical ideas around a central element of theology: Thomas Aquinas organized his system around the Creator God. Martin Luther put justification in the center of his biblical understanding. To

Wesley, the Holy Spirit and regeneration were important. Bultmann orientated his theology around the doctrine of conversion. Dietrich Bonhoeffer built his theology on the Lordship of Christ; John Calvin organized his system around the doctrine of grace. Scofield built his system on the return of Christ.

The New Testament (NT) kerygma (proclamation) is built on the Five Pillars of the Gospel. If you want to be effective in discipleship, you need to understand the five pillars of the gospel.

First, the word "***gospel***" (*euangelion*) is primarily a NT word. Linguistically, it means "good news." However, the linguistic definition does not help us understand its content or structure.

Second, the gospel is built on OT theology: God, man, sin, Israel, revelation, Law, covenants, and the Kingdom of God. While a portion of these ideas are mentioned again and again in the NT, they should be considered as THE FOUNDATION on which the Five Pillars of the Gospel are constructed.

PILLAR ONE: THE PERSON OF CHRIST

Mark 1:1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. . .

The gospel is the good news that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. The name "***Jesus***" is the OT name for Joshua (VIhsou/). "Joshua" (VIhsou) means "*Jehovah is salvation."* The term "***Yeshua***" is built on the OT name of "*Joshua*." Mark identifies Jesus as the Savior.

The word "***Christ***" is **not** "Jesus" last name. There is **not** a Mr. & Mrs. Christ. The Greek word for "***Christ***" (Cristou/, Christos) means "*anointed one*." The Hebrew term for "***Christ***" is the word *machiyach* (Ax*yvim) or "*Messiah*" (See the term "*Anointed*" in Psalm 2:2). Hebrews anointed their prophets, priests, and kings with oil to signify their special, holy calling.

Anointed ones could not hold all three offices in Israel. Only a very special person could serve all three. The Jews, therefore, looked forward to the day when God's Messiah—the perfect prophet, priest, king would rule in Israel. He would be David's greater Son—the One who would usher in the Kingdom of God (Isaiah 9:6-8; 11:1-6).

The designation "***Son of God***" is found in Psalm 2 and Isaiah 9:6. The term "***Son***" is laden with theological significance. It does not mean Jesus was created or procreated. His was a seedless conception. His Sonship is a declared relationship between God the Father and God the Son. As Son, He partakes of the divine nature. As a man, he partakes of human nature. Jesus is the God-man, Israel's Messiah—fully God and fully man—two distinct natures without confusion or amalgamation.

The first pillar of the gospel is the Person of Christ. The gospel declares that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. His royal personage includes such prestigious titles as "*Son of Man*" (Matthew 9:6), "*Savior*" (Luke 2:11), "*Logos*" (John 1:1), "*Firstborn*" (Colossians 1:15), "*Creator*" (John 1:2-3), "*Lamb of God*" (John 1:29), "*King of Israel*" (John 1:49), "*Mediator*" (1 Timothy 2:5), "*the Way*, the Truth, and the Life" (John 14:6). Notice the last three titles.

If someone were to ask you this question, "Is Christianity the only way to God?" what would you say?

Simply stated the answer is "NO!"

Christianity is **not** the only way to God. Christ is the only way to God. Jesus is **not** a way to Theos, but **The Way**! He is **not** a truth, but the Truth! He is **not** a way to life, He is The Life. Jesus is the only Mediator that can unite man to God. He is God's only locus of salvation -- – the most hated doctrine in the Bible! The task of discipleship is to help "faithful men" to apprehend the uniqueness of the Son so they can find God and find life (1 John 5:12, 13).

The doctrine of Christ as THE Son of God destroyed centuries of beliefs germane to Hellenistic man, the unity of all being, sometimes called the "*great chain of being."* This was the idea that man was different from deity only by degree, not by nature. Thus, in Hellenic thought, a man could be a god; man's potential was unlimited. Thus, the Caesars saw themselves as gods with power to decree and deserving of worship. Christ's divine nature and mediation meant freedom from all man's claims to divinity. The whole view, "As man is, God once was; as God is, man may be" is heresy plain and simple.

It is good news that Jesus is the Son of God.

PILLAR TWO: THE HISTORY OF CHRIST

1 Corinthians 15:1-3 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand . . . For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

It is good news that Christ existed. To any who might doubt the existence of Christ, consider this question. What sane movement would fabricate a story about a non-existent leader; a man rejected by His own people and then executed by crucifixion by a Roman governor for treason against Caesar; and then declare, "We're his followers; and we want to be crucified too?" Sane people don't do this. There are more convenient ways to commit suicide.

Notice the three terms that describe the history of Christ: ***death, burial,*** and ***resurrection***. It is good news that Christ died, was buried, and rose again. But,

why is this good news? Would it be good news if your father or mother died? Was it good news when Einstein died? Why is it good news that Christ died?

Religion is about man's fundamental problem. Man's fundamental problem is that he is going to die. Can death be overcome? Every religion from Arabian Islam to Zen Buddhism seeks to answer the question, "Is there life after death?" Even atheists have beliefs about man's origin and destiny. All have answers. But are any of their answers true? What is the evidence? What counts as evidence? Where's the PROOF?

As you study religion including evolutionary atheism, you will notice a major difference between Christianity and all other religions. All other religions are philosophical propositions about life and death. Christianity does **not** begin with a philosophy, but a fact! It is not just about the moral teaching of Jesus. Christianity is an historical account of the God-man who physically died, was buried because he had died, and who physically, literally, tangibly came back to life. Over 500 witnesses saw, heard, and touched him. If Christ died and rose again, he solved man's fundamental problem! This is good news indeed; that is, if Christ defeated death, he can solve your death.

But, what counts as proof? When it comes to solving man's fundamental problem, we are not interested in theories or hypotheses, or mathematical axioms. We want synthetic proof–legal proof. We want something that will stand up in a court of law. In a courtroom, the judge wants to know: "What did you hear? What did you see? What did you feel?" He is not interested in speculation or opinion or hearsay, just the facts! The Scripture records that over 500 hundred men experienced the resurrection event: "We saw him did. We saw him alive! We touched him. We heard him." That was their testimony (1 John 1:1-4).

Acts 1:3 To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:

It is good news that Jesus died. If he did not die on the cross, but swooned, then he did not defeat death. He only cheated death. If he were not buried, there would be reasonable doubt that he really died. The Roman soldiers, Joseph of Arimathea, and the women knew Jesus was dead. That is why they buried him.

God left investigators with many infallible proofs that death can be defeated (Acts 1:3). The gospel, therefore, is the good news that one man died, was buried, and rose from the grave and proved it in the courtroom of the Roman theater. It is good news His history is certain and true.

PILLAR THREE: THE MEANING OF CHRIST'S HISTORY

Unlike the life and death of ordinary people, the entire history of Christ has meaning.

His victorious history gives hope. Since Jesus solved man's fundamental problem, there is hope that He can solve your fundamental problem. This is good news. A religion based on *fideism*[1] rooted in philosophy and lacking empirical evidence is merely speculation and conjecture. Christianity is **not** an hypothesis about life after death, but direct, legal evidence that Jesus defeated death rooted in the historical facts.

Revelation 1:18 I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

Furthermore, it is important to understand the essential elements of our Lord's history. His history includes His preexistence (PE), His birth and life on earth (B & L), His death (D), His burial (B), His resurrection (R), His present risen life (PRL) or highly exalted life (PEL), and His coming glory (CG).

Nouns like "*righteousness*," "*Son*," "*servant*," and "*prophet*" help us understand the meaning of our Lord's life. Words like "*grace*," "*redemption*," "propitiation," and "*reconciliation*" define the meaning of His death (Romans 3:24, 25: 5:9, 10).Terms like "*victory*" (1 Corinthians 15:54), "*justification*" (Romans 4:25), "*redemptions*" or "*forgiveness*" (Ephesians 1:7) interpret the meaning of His resurrection. Concepts like "*intercession*" (Hebrews 7:25), "*priesthood*" (Hebrews 7:24), "Messiah" (Acts 2:36), and "Mediator" (Hebrews 8:6), inform us of the meaning of His PRL. Phrases like "*resurrection*" (1 Corinthians 15:21), "*coming*" (1 Thessalonians 5:17), "*vengeance*" and "*destruction*" (2 Thessalonians 1:8-10) help us to interpret the meaning of His CG.

The gospel is the good news that Christ's history has meaning and significance. It can be interpreted.

PILLAR FOUR: THE EFFECTS OF CHRIST'S HISTORY

Ephesians 1:3, 13 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ . . . . In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise . . .

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[1] Fideism: a school of thought based on faith and hope; beliefs independent of facts and empirical evidence; beliefs hostile to reason and common sense; that is, "faith-ism;" the assertion that my faith determines reality.

It is good news that Christ's history showers the believer with benefits. When a man believes in the Savior, he is marvelously impacted by our Lord's accomplishments.

Four effects are mentioned in the Book of Acts: **forgiveness** (5:31), *the gift of the Holy Spirit* (2:38), *the gift of eternal life* (11:18; 13:48), and *justification* (13:39).

Through His death he accomplished the purposes of redemption. From his enthroned position at the right hand of God, He gifts the believer with the Holy Spirit. Many benefits are mentioned in the letters of Paul: "*justification*" (Romans 5:1), "*redemption*" (Ephesians 1:7), "*reconciliation*," (Romans 5:9, 10), "*regeneration*" (Titus 3:5), "*identification*" (Romans 6:3-5), "*adoption*" (Romans 8:15), "*freedom from law*" (Romans 6:14), "*election*" (1 Peter 1:2), "predestin*a*tion" (Ephesians 1:5), "*baptism into his body*" (1 Corinthians 12:13), "*eternal security*" (Romans 11:29), and "*glorification*" (Romans 8:30).

When a person believes in the Savior, the benefits of salvation are bestowed in a first fruits way. The full harvest will occur at the *Parousia* (coming) of our Lord. This is the now, not-yet concept of theology.

It is good news that Christ's history showers the believer with benefits.

PILLAR FIVE: THE RESPONSE TO HIS HISTORY

It is good news that we know how to respond to God.

1 Timothy 1:9-11 Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine; According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.

Notice the word "*gospel*" in this section (1:11). See also the list of behaviors. The directory concerns immoral acts that are contrary to God's law-order. The gospel not only teaches us about the Person of Christ, His History, the Meaning and Effects of His history, but it teaches us about how to respond to God.

A man is ***not*** saved by law, but a saved man keeps the law. The law of God ***cannot*** regenerate man or society, but it can restrain evil. The gospel does *not* teach salvation by law, **but** it does contain law. Failure to see NT commands as case law has been the product of more than a little evil. It is terrible theology that pits law against grace. The opposite of law is **not** grace, but lawlessness. The opposite of grace is **not** law, but performance-based theology or permissiveness. The gospel teaches us how to please God, and God is pleased when we keep His commandments. It teaches us how to live righteously according to the standard of God's law (Romans 13:8)

John 1:12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

John 6:29 Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

John 15:10 If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

1 Corinthians 7:19 Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.

1 John 5:2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.

In ancient times, men did all kinds of despicable acts thinking they were pleasing God. The prophets of Baal cut off fingers and castrated themselves believing this would please Baal (1 Kings 18). Manasseh burned his children as a sacrifice (2 Chronicles 33:6). Balaam taught people to fornicate with temple prostitutes (Numbers 25: 1-6). Pharisees tithed mint and cumin (Luke 11:42).

Today, Hindus lay on beds of nails hoping to excite one of their 330 million deities.

In Mexico, Roman Catholics crawl up mountains on bleeding knees seeking to capture the heart of Virgin Mary. Animistic Indians dance and chant around campfires hoping to catch the attention of the eternal spirit. Jews avoid shellfish and pork.

Islamic sects have members that commit suicide hoping to obtain Allah's favor. Some people in the Baltic States walk on hot coals in an effort to prove their faith. Some vampirettes drink blood. Other religions sacrifice goats or pigeons in an effort to appease some god.

New Agers practice astrology, meditation, and channeling. Do any of these things capture the heart of God?

The gospel does <u>not</u> leave us guessing as to what pleases God! What pleases Him is ***repentance toward sin*** and ***faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ*** (Acts 20:21). Two sides of the same coin, faith and repentance are what God requires to inherit the blessings of salvation.

Actually, every command (baptism, holiness, love) in the New Testament tells us what God requires. However, it is essential we understand that it is faith in the Son that unites us to the blessings of salvation and makes us children of God. All others responses are the products of our salvation -- acts done out of thankfulness, **<u>not</u>** necessity.

Note this difference. It is good news we know how to become a child of God (faith and repentance) and how to please Him once we are His child (obedience

to all other commands). The first is called justification, and the latter is called sanctification.

Margaret Sangster, the social worker, told her colleagues about seeing a small boy in an urban ghetto sitting on the stairs of a tenement. He appeared little more than a bit of twisted human flesh. An automobile struck the youngster. Although not part of her caseload, she took the boy to an orthopedist. She cut through the bureaucratic red tape and raised the funds for his operation. Two years later he came to her office and he turned a cartwheel for her. She said to herself, "If I never accomplish anything else in my life, at least here is one young man to whom I can point where I have made a real difference!" At that point she paused in her presentation and asked, "Where do you think that boy is today?" Several made suggestions–a schoolteacher? A physician? Perhaps a social worker? There was a longer pause. Margaret Sangster said, "*No, he is in the penitentiary for one of the foulest crimes a human being can commit."* Then she added, "*I was instrumental in teaching him how to walk again, but there was no one to teach him where to walk*" (Making a Difference).

It is good news that the gospel teaches us how to respond to God to be saved (justification by faith), and how to please Him once we are His child (sanctification through obedience).

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

In summary, the Gospel has five pillars: The Person of Christ; the History of Christ; The Meaning of His History; The Effects of His History for those who believe; and, The Response Required to Please God. If you understand these pillars, you can be an effective, accurate teacher of God's Word.

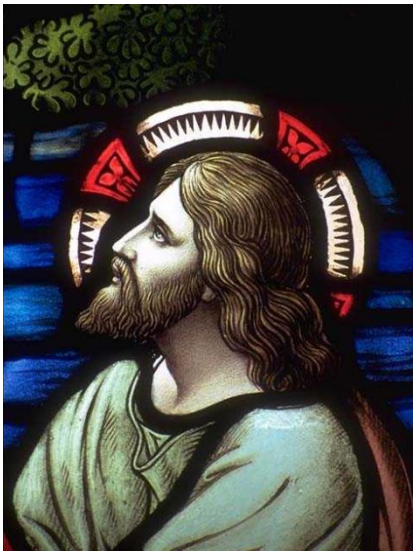
7. The Mystery of Godliness

Six Parts of the Gospel Held Up by the Pillar of Truth

1 Timothy 3:15-16

"But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." – 1 Timothy 3:15-16



Paul identifies six parts of the "***mystery of godliness***" held up by the Pillar of Truth.

Therefore, this brief seeks to answer the question, "**What is the mystery of godliness?"**

Without Controversy

The word "***controversy***" comes from the Greek word *homologoumenos* which means to perceive, understand, grasp, observe, and see.

We get the word *homoletics* (studies on how to preach) from this term. It works as an adverb modifying the being-verb "is" meaning undeniably, certainly.

The word "***without controversy***" acts like our English legal terms "notwithstanding," "undeniable," "indisputable," "irrefutable," or "unassailable."

That is to say, any argument contrary to what he is about to state admits no dispute and has no standing. Metaphorically speaking Paul is saying, "you can take what I am about to say to the bank. It is as true as true can get."

Great is the mystery

The Greek word "***mystery***" (*musterion*) does **not** refer to something difficult or impossible to understand.

Rather, it informs us of something hidden or concealed in the Old Testament that has manifested itself to mankind, namely, the arrival of the Christ in history.

Great (Mega)

While we use the term "*great*" frequently, very few things are really great! But, GREAT is the mystery of godliness.

The Greek word for "***great***" is *mega*. A superlative adjective, it identifies the wonder and superior quality of a thing. We use this Greek word as a prefix to many English terms: *megabyte, megawatt, megastar, megabuck, megavolt, megolomanica, megaflop*, and many more.

Keep this word in mind as the apostle reveals six facts about the indivisible MEGA mysteries of godliness that form the pillar of truth (3:25).

Godliness

The term "***godliness***" refers in a general sense to the heart of the gospel, the eye of God, true religion, piety, and sanctification.

The term "***godly***" usually refers to acts of piety or to being God-like in habits and character. But, this is not the stress of the word "godliness" in this text. In this passage "***godliness***" (*eusebeia*) is a noun and not an adjective; a fact, and not a fantasy; a reality and not a theory; the absolute gospel and not a nice story; the God-man, and not a myth;

Having listed the character qualities that should mark pastors and deacons, the apostle is **not** referring to the Christian's duty to be godly in verse 16. Rather, he shows us the Source of Godliness by using the genitive case. Paul points to a person in history — Someone Who actually existed — Someone Who is our Banner for righteous living. Any other Model is idolatry.

Paul takes us on a journey to the core of Divine concerns, the invasion of the kingdom of God into history through the Son, "the real McCoy," the prototype of godliness, the source and display of God-like attributes, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Savior is not like *Theos*, He is T*h*eos. He does not resemble God, He is very God of God!

John 1:1, 14 "In the beginning was the Word (logos), and the Word was with God (Theos), and the Word (logos) was God (Theos) . . . . and the Word (logos) was made flesh and dwelt (skenoo = tabernacled) among us and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten (monogenes = one of a kind) of the Father, full of grace and truth."

John 10:30 "I and my Father are one ."

[Note: The word "***one***" in this text is a nominative, neuter, adjectival pronoun. The text does **not** refer to our Lord being one in personality with the Father, but having the same substance as Father, being very God of God as s spiritual being– the neuter referring to substance and not personality. No other being in the universe can make this claim, but with Christ, the claim came with proof of claim.]

Thus, the core of "***godliness***" in this text is **not** about our duty to perfect holiness, but about the marvelous history of Christ: His incarnation, life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension and session at the right hand of the Father — the pillar of the gospel — that God was among us in the Person of His Son. Great is the mystery of Theos becoming anthropos — something more significant in history than alleged encounters of a third kind.

SIX HISTORICAL FACTS ABOUT THE MEGA MYSTERY OF GODLINESS

The six verbs in this section are all aorist passives ending with the same sound (*theta, eta* — the ***"uh"*** sound). They form a rhythmic cadence like a military hymn.

You can almost hear the apostle pounding a railroad spike at the beginning of each strobe while he sings the wonders of this mega mystery:

ephanerotha (bam),

edikiotha (bam),

ophtha (bam),

echaruchtha (bam),

episteutha (bam), and

anelamphtha (bam).

When it comes to godliness, the best among us are like the solar panels on a Mars Rover covered with dust, but Jesus?

The Son does **not** shine as example of godliness. He IS the essence of Godliness. He does **not** mirror the sunlight of holiness, the nucleus of holiness that lights the cosmos burns eternally within the Core of the Savior. He IS to mankind what the Sun is to God's creation.

Theos was in Christ and Christ was *Theos* in His birth, baptism, temptation, ministry, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and present exalted reign at the right hand of God.

(1) The first fact regarding this mega mystery is the incarnation of Christ — the day that God became a man.

"***God was manifest in the flesh***" (KJV) or the alternative, "***Who was manifest in the flesh***" or "***He was manifest in the flesh***" (ESV and others).

Because *the first rule of interpretation* is to "secure the text," we must diverge here to wrestle with a textual problem. The KJV translated the text as "God was manifest in the flesh" while the NASB and ESV and others translate the text as "Who" or "He was manifest in the flesh."

Without bogging the reader down in the detail of textual criticism, the reader should know that the original Greek was written in Uncial letters (uppercase without space between words). Over time, ancient manuscripts wore out and developed smears and smudges. This is the case here. Moreover, translators often abbreviated words like Θς for Θεος Theos, "God"

Earlier manuscripts use the term "***He who was manifest***" and **not** "God was manifest."

However, **we must consider the theology** surrounding the textual variance. John is very clear the "Word (logos) was with God (Theos) and was God (Theos) . . . and that the "logos became flesh" (John 1:1, 14).

Because Jesus is Theos, I tend to sustain the legitimacy of the KJV translation, "***Theos was manifest in the flesh . . .***" But, in comparing ancient texts, the proper translation appears to be, "***He was manifest in the flesh***" (Robertson, Metzger, Aland and Aland).

Getting past the textual variance, let's move on to the truth of this passage.

The GREAT mystery is that God / Elohim / the LORD of the Old Testament became a man; that is, *Theos* appeared on earth, in space and time, as a living, breathing, flesh and blood human being — a man (*anthropos*) called "*the Christ.*"

Forget alien sightings and invasions. Nothing in history compares to that day when *Theos* entered history in and through the Son in Bethlehem around 2 BC.

That *Theos* appeared in a human body with a human nature is the MEGA TRUTH of the gospel. This fact became the pillar of the gospel, and the theme of Renaissance Christmas Art and historical Christmas carols.

(2) The second fact regarding this mega mystery is that Christ was "justified in the Spirit . . ."

The legal, court-room word "***justified***" means "*to declare righteous*," or "*to declare authentic, genuine, or real.*" In law, we demand verification, confirmation, validation, authentication, endorsement, and certification of all kinds of truth claims, real estate transactions, and money matters involving controversy.

What could be more controversial than Jesus is God, born of a virgin, died for our sins, and rose from the dead?

Any megalomaniac can claim to be God, but where is the evidence?

Pursuant to the Administrative Procedure Act (5 USCS 556 (d)) the proponent of a rule or order has the burden of proof.

Hearsay, wishes, hopes, presumption, theory, and opinion are not accepted as facts in a court of law.

> *Rule 301. Presumptions in Civil Cases Generally*
>
> *In a civil case, unless a federal statute or these rules provide otherwise, the party against whom a presumption is directed has the burden of producing evidence to rebut the presumption. But this rule does not shift the burden of persuasion, which remains on the party who has it originally.*

Our Lord not only claimed to be God, He provided *proof of claim with strict proof of claim — even infallible proof of claim* (Acts 1:3).

His miracles were His credentials. Only God can turn water into wine, heal the sick, and walk on water. Out of death, the Spirit raised Jesus from the dead vindicating His claim that He is God, that He is Lord over the grave.

Over 500 witnesses testified to a real, tangible, historical encounter with the living Christ. Thus, the phrase "justified in the Spirit" announces lawyer-like verification for Divine assertions.

That Jesus is God is an absurdity . . . without substantial proof of claim. The miracles of our Lord and especially His resurrection from the dead is the Spirit's proof of claim — His legal verification that Christ is indeed Theos, very God of God, in human flesh.

> *Romans 1:4 And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:*

C.S. Lewis, the great English literary genius said it like this,

> *"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."— C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity*

(3) The third fact regarding this mega mystery is that before, during, and after His resurrection, He was "seen of angels . . ."

Can you think of anything on this earth that might be of interest to angels?

To my knowledge, I've never encountered an angel. And, I can't think of anything in American politics that would attract angels: WWI, WWII, 9-11?

But, the day that God became a man excited the angelic mind. The incarnation was like the Super Bowl of history and every angel wanted a ticket to the main event.

So GREAT was the Divine visitation to earth, Angels fell from skies like falling stars with wonderment and power to assist Christ in the grandeur and glory of His advent, temptations, ministry, crucifixion, and guardianship of His tomb.

See: Luke 2:9-13; Luke 22:43; Luke 24:4; Hebrews 1:6; Matthew 4:11; John 20:11-12.

The modern mind would do well to take an interest in that which captures the attention of angels.

(4) The fourth fact regarding this mega mystery is that before, during, and after His resurrection, He was "Preached unto the Gentiles . . ."

The Apostle places preaching of the historicity of Christ among the "***great***" (*mega*) things which constituted the "mystery" of Divine truth.

By preaching, the Apostle is **not** referring to well-prepared sermons, but the factual reporting of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ with conviction and confidence as the newsworthy event in the hostile climate of the first century. This "preaching" was the opposite of fake news by the fake media as it was characterized by formality, gravity, and authority (Strong).

Consider the adversarial environment in which these historical events took place. It would have been natural for the early disciples to go sub silentio and remain mute. But, they didn't. The only ones remaining silent were the hostile witnesses (the Pharisees). The disciples possessed a conviction that what they saw and heard was as real as a smile that brightens your day. They could not help but proclaim the facts of Christ's victorious history. That these fantastic claims were preached at all was a miracle of miracles. After all, you could get jailed, stoned, or crucified for preaching a message that challenged the authority of Caesar. Stephen comes to mind (Acts 6:1ff; 4:12; 17:6-7).

Second, the message was not only preached to Jews, it was preached to all the nations hugging the Mediterranean — the world jury hearing the facts of the Case.

Before our Lord's advent, a wall of partition divided the Jewish and Gentile world. In Christ's gospel, we find that the playing field for salvation was leveled for Jews and Greeks, rich and poor, men and women, slaves and free men. What Jewish man in his right mind would extend this gospel of hope to Gentiles? None, unless the message had been justified by the Spirit!

No wonder Paul listed the preaching of this gospel as a mega event in the first century! See Ephesians 6:19; Colossians 1:26-27; Colossians 4:3.

(5) The fifth fact regarding this mega mystery is that before, during, and after His resurrection, He was "believed on in the world . . ."

Jesus said to his disciples, "***You are my witnesses . . .***" (Acts 1:8) . . . and, witnesses must be cross-examined and directly interrogated to test the credibility of the witness and the truth of his testimony.

The gospel message was not preached in "safe zones" or "free speech cages" in back alleys or in government-approved amphitheaters. It was preached to juries in the market places of the Roman world *mano a mano* among Jews and Greeks competent to judge faith claims and to cross-examine the witnesses.

The Apostles announced the hope of salvation among the Gentiles. . . . and the reasonable, serious Romans and Greeks examined the evidence for the resurrection of Christ and believed the gospel.

While extraordinary claims demand proof of claim, they do not demand extraordinary evidence. These disciples used the same rules of evidence that we use today. What did you see? What did you hear? What did you feel and touch? (1 John 1:1-3).

The early disciples considered themselves witnesses of the Christ event. They were not fideists who believed faith operated apart from facts and reason. Thomas said he would NOT believe until he could place his fingers in the wounds of Christ. Thomas was not being an ornery doubter or skeptic. He was a normal, empirical man who rejected the fantastic and hearsay regarding a resurrected human being. The burden of proof rested on the claimant and he refused to believe until he could personally verify the claim with his five senses (John 20:24-29).

The Apostle identifies faith ("believed") in this incredible message as something remarkable among pragmatic, coherent, thinking men prone to shun outrageous claims. Belief in this mystery shows the accuracy of the testimonies and the power of the truth to convince the most skeptical but honest mind.

(6) The sixth fact regarding this mega mystery is that before, during, and after His resurrection, He was "received up into glory."

Concerning the ascension, Paul identifies it as the punctuation mark of the great mega mystery of all time.

Forty days after his resurrection, Jesus was taken up into heaven in the sight of his disciples. His ascension and session at the right hand of the Father as the exalted Christ ended the earthly history of our Lord.

While the story provides a nice ending to an incredible event, people do not normally levitate off the earth without some modern rocket-propulsion system. Even though such an event is highly improbable, the witnesses said this is the way Jesus left earth (Acts 1-2:30-32).

Thus, the ascension of Christ and His session at the right hand of God not only concludes the historical account of the great mystery of godliness, the Bible

It is a kingly coronation where the triumphant Savior receives a golden crown. Having accomplished eternal redemption for all mankind, He now sits on the eternal throne as "Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36).

With this good news, you don't want to be a person who is absorbed in science fiction, extraterrestrials, and alien-invasion theories to annihilate the human race only to miss THE ONE, TRUE, HISTORICALLY, VERIFIABLE VISITATION of *Theos* in history in and through His Son. Forget aliens! Investigate the Christ event!

The context of this passage is the previous verse:

1 Timothy 3:15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

Every Christian church has the potential to be a "***pillar and ground of the truth.***"

Paul anticipated a delay in his visit to Timothy, and informs him of his purpose in writing his letter: "***that thou mayest know***," a hina clause with a subjunctive holding out the possibility that Timothy and his readers might come to a full knowledge on how men "***ought***" (*de*) to behave themselves "***in the house of God.***"

The "***house of God***" would be a church gathering, not a church building. A true church doesn't practice social distancing. Healthy Christians don't self-quarantine.

The word "***conduct***" or "***behave***" comes from the Greek word *anestrepho* which means to "*turn upside down*" or "*turn up and down*."

Christianity has a code of conduct which is accurately portrayed in chapter 3:1-14. A true believer changes his ways, his dress, his attitudes, his demeanor, and his habits when he or she takes up the cross to follow Christ.

Paul established Christian ethics consistent with the law of the LORD God (Romans 13:10).

He commands believers to put off the old and put on the new in Ephesians 4:21-24.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul orders men to remove their headwear and for women to veil themselves when meeting in the house of God to remember the headship and history of Christ (1 Corinthians 11).

In 1 Timothy faithful men are exhorted to pray with clean hands (2:8), and women are commanded to dress modestly and take on the role of a student.

In chapter three, the apostle lists the virtues that must mark elders and deacons in pursuit of Divine interests.

In chapter four, Paul exhorts Timothy to avoid (Jewish) myths (fake history) and to train himself in godliness (4:7). If Godly commands like these were put into practice, it would turn the average American church upside down . . . or is that "right side up?"

If you want to be Godly, don't look in and in and in. Forget New Age meditations influenced by Eastern philosophy, mysticism, yoga, Hinduism and Buddhism. Rather, look at the glory of our Lord.

> *"But we all, with open face beholding (present middle participle) as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed (metamorphoo) into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18).*
>
> *"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2).*

Change comes to our values and perceptions when we see and treasure the mystery of godliness of the Lord Jesus.

Believe the gospel and be saved; reject this gospel and be lost.

Figure 3: Unsplash Andrew Lane

8. The Gospel is <u>Not</u> Inviting Jesus Into Your Heart

John 3:14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up

I can't tell you how many times in my life I've heard a Baptist Sunday School teacher tell children, "If you want to be saved, you have to invite Jesus into your heart."

What?

Where is that in Scripture?

I don't blame the Sunday School teachers because most have little knowledge of the Bible and almost no

theological training. However, it grieves me to hear a Baptist preacher give an invitation and ask for a show of hands for those who want to "invite Jesus into their heart."

See the test if you are Roman Catholic or Protestant - http://nikeinsights.famguardian.org/forums/topic/test-are-you-roman-catholic-or-protestant/

Stay with me for a few minutes.

The gospel is <u>not</u> how "You must be born again," or "You must invite Jesus into your heart."

When the rich young ruler came to Jesus and asked, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus did **<u>not</u>** say, "Invite me into your heart." He ordered the man to go sell all that he had, give it to the poor, and then come and follow me (Luke 18:18).

When Jesus told Nicodemus, "*You must be born again*," He did **<u>not</u>** say, "Invite me into your heart," but pointed the man to the serpent lifted up in the wilderness (John 3:14).

When our Lord was denouncing the cities for their spiritual lethargy and explaining the way of salvation, he did **<u>not</u>** preach, "Invite me into your heart." Rather, he instructed the hungry to "*Come to me . . . and take my yoke upon you, and learn of me"* (Matthew 11:20-29).

When the Son instructed his critics for healing a man on the Sabbath, he did **<u>not</u>** tell them "to invite me into your heart." He taught them, "*whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life*." (John 5:24).

If we look at Jesus' invitation terms in the Bread of Life Discourse, we see action verbs like "***believes***," "***looks***," "***hears***," "***comes***," ***eats***," "***drinks***," "***abides***" in me shall be saved. Not once does he tell the crowd to "invite me into your heart." In fact, a case can be made that the real truth taught in John 6 is that "*All that the Father gives me, shall come to me*."

Why is this important?

First, the phrase "You must invite Jesus into your heart" is very Catholic. And, there are no better Catholics on earth than Baptist Sunday School teachers.

Second, the great issue of the Reformation was **<u>the locus of salvation</u>**. Was it in the human heart, or was it at Calvary?

Catholics, by the way, do not teach men are saved by works! In the Counter-Reformation (Council of Trent) Catholic theologians taught that to be saved you must have a change in heart; a change in character; faith in your heart; or Jesus in your heart. To the Catholic mind you have to be born again to be saved, and

the way you are born again is to invite Jesus in your heart to change you and to make you good enough to go to heaven.

> *" . . .the beginning of the said Justification is to be derived from the prevenient grace of God, through Jesus Christ, that is to say, from His vocation, whereby, without any merits existing on their parts, they are called; that so they, who by sins were alienated from God, may be disposed through His quickening and assisting grace, to convert themselves to their own justification, by freely assenting to and co-operating with that said grace: in such sort that, while God touches the heart of man by the illumination of the Holy Ghost, neither is man himself utterly without doing anything while he receives that inspiration . . ." (Council of Trent, On Justification, Chapter V)*
>
> *" . . .the charity of God is poured forth, by the Holy Spirit, in the hearts of those that are justified . . ." (Chapter VII)*

Theologically, Catholics fuse sanctification with justification.

The Reformers did not deny the truth that a man must be born again. Rather, Luther and Calvin emphasized that regardless of what the Spirit does in a man's heart, the locus of salvation is at Calvary; i.e., it is what the Lamb accomplished on the cross that is important. God calls us to look to Christ at the cross and His accomplishments on the sinner's behalf, and **not** to look inside at some "change" that is occurring as the basis of salvation.

> *This revelation of the posteriora Dei takes place in suffering and the cross. And it demands faith--for only faith recognizes that the One on the cross is, in fact, God (Luther, Thesis #20).*

Thus, the salvic issue at the Reformation revolved around this question: "Is a man saved by his faith in the doing and dying of Christ," or "Is a man saved by inviting Jesus in his heart to change the man to make him more acceptable to God?"

And, if the latter be true, the haunting life-long question will be, "Have I changed enough?"

Is the locus of salvation at the cross, or in the human heart? Is a person justified by faith in God's work at the cross "***for us***," or is a person justified by faith in what God is doing "***in us***?"

Notice that Jesus told Nicodemus he had to be born again, but He did **not** command him to be born again. Our Lord challenged this self-centered, subjective, introspective Pharisee and directed Him to the serpent lifted up on the pole in the wilderness.

There, the viper bitten Israelites were instructed to look to serpent in the middle of the camp to be healed and "be born again." They had to take their eyes of their snake bite, off their snake bite potent, off their snake bite physician, off their snake bite tourniquet, and to look outside themselves to a serpent on the cross, an icon of Christ and His work at Calvary.

Not once were they instructed to invite the serpent into their hearts or to try and suck the poison out of their wounds. They had to look away from themselves to wounds of Another -- "by his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).

There is no command in Scripture for a man to be born again. None! But, there are plenty of commands to look at Christ, to believe, and to have faith in His accomplishments at Calvary on the sinner's behalf.

"Inviting Jesus into your heart," was not the cry of the Reformationists, but it was the cry of the Counter Reformationists!

In fact, Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus, stressed retreats, meditation, and spiritual encounters with Jesus; that is, he hoped his followers would have some kind of "dynamic," life changing experience with God — a change so transforming it would make them a loyal subject of the Catholic Church which was built on subjective experiences.

Perhaps, the beautiful Catholic sculpture of "***The Ecstasy of Saint Theresa***" that portrays a cherub piercing the heart of St. Theresa of Avila with an arrow and being overcome with pain and love for Jesus symbolizes the heart theology of Catholic Counter Reformation.

http://www.artble.com/artists/gian_lorenzo_bernini/sculpture/the_ecstasy_of_saint_theresa

The great crisis of experiential heart change is how born again do you have to be? How changed do you have to become to be saved? Yes, those who believe in Christ do change, but that is **not** the basis of salvation. The Christian gospel is **not** come to Jesus and change, but "Christ died for our sins" and rose again the third day (Romans 15:1-4).

Looking inside for change, for transformation, for a work of a spirit within is *wretched subjectivism*. It is not any different from Hinduism, Sanatana Dharma, or eastern meditation or agama cosmologies that stress yoga, mantras, and inner spirituality.

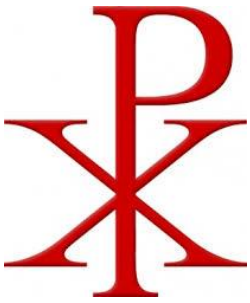
The Puritans coming to America would have none of this. Early American churches were founded on the Reformation doctrine that God's great work for mankind was **not** in the human heart, but at the cross; that men are saved, not by some work of the Spirit in man, but by the Lord's substitutionary work on the cross for the sinner. The Bible calls us **not** to look within, but to look

outside of ourselves in faith to His redemptive work and the shedding of blood for man's sins (1 Peter 1:18-19).

If you tell children or adults they must invite "Jesus in their heart," you set them on a course of wretched subjectivism where they are prone to look inside for "enough change" to determine if God will accept them. And, how changed do you have to be? Will you ever be changed enough to satisfy claims of a holy God?

If you are a Sunday School teacher, seek to grow in understanding the issues of the Reformation. Instead of telling children to invite Jesus into their heart, invite them to understand and believe the substitutionary work of Christ for them on their behalf. And, this is the gospel, "that Christ died **for** our sins," is it not?

Cruci Dum Spiro Fido



9. The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa

The beautiful sculpture of St. Theresa of Avila by Gian Lorenzo Berini is a Counter-Reformation masterpiece of art showing St. Theresa being pierce by an arrow. The arrow represents the love of God. In this seen, we see her overcome with a personal experience – an experience that represents a "new birth" with a stunning change in her heart for good.

Figure 4: Ecstasy of St. Teresa
Creative Commons License # **89632483**

10. Justification and the Reformation

1 Corinthians 15:1-4

During the 16th century man was in search of God; modern man is in search of man.

The 16th century mind asked, "How can a sinful man be justified before God in this world?"

Modern man seems to be more interested in demanding God justify Himself for the way He is running the world (Paul Tillich).

The Roman Catholics sought to be right with God by repentance, changing one's heart, renewal, and rebirth of the soul which plunges man into wretched subjectivism.

The Reformers read the Book of Romans to find that men could gain a right standing with God by faith in the redemptive work of Christ at Calvary.

Thus, the Reformers went out into the world to justified God before men — men who presumptively removed God from His throne demanding that God justify Himself before them.

Modern men see themselves as super-intellectuals who demand that God be held accountable for His trespasses against humanity.

Thus, there is a need to return to the Reformation question, "How can a man be just before God" (Job 9:2).

For this answer, the Reformers pursued God's remedy in Christ which gives man a right standing with God by faith in the person and accomplishments of Christ at Calvary.

1 Corinthians 15:1-4

1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;

2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

To be saved, one must define and believe the following:

- "gospel"
- Who or what is "Christ"?
- Why Christ "died"
- That "for" is a term for "substitution."
- That "sins" is serious; so much so, our Lord had to pay sin's penalty (6:23).
- "According to the Scriptures" is the grounds of authority and veracity.
- That "buried" requires a death.
- That "rose again" is the greatest miracle of history – an act that overcame man's fundamental problem.
- That the gospel must be "received" by faith as one's hope of salvation from "sins."

11. The Great Issues of the Reformation

Are you Roman Catholic or Reformed in you Theology?

Questionaire

How would Martin Luther and the Reformers answer the following questions?

(1) Do you believe that the grace of God in our heart is able to make you acceptable in the sight of God?

(2) Do you believe Christ as a divine Person can dwell in your heart?

(3) Do you believe that the indwelling of Christ can make the good works of a Christian acceptable to God?

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The Great Issues of the Reformation

People today do not fully appreciate the Reformation because modern minds are almost totally ignorant of the Bible and its gospel message. Young people cann**ot** tell you how to be right with God, but they can tell you ten reasons why you should watch the latest Hollywood blockbuster . . . or five ways to improve

your self-esteem . . . or how they are going to change the world . . . or what they ate for lunch.

Thinking minds of the 16th century were concerned how to be right with God. Consequently, pious souls looked to the church for guidance only to discover their most zealous members were prisoners of guilt and shame.

To find the answer on how a man could be just before God, churchmen plunged into the Holy Scriptures to find a remedy for a guilty conscience. A back to the Bible movement was born and the fires of the Pauline gospel swept across Europe saving souls and releasing men from the ropes that tied them to misery.

The New Testament presents two aspects of the Work of Salvation.

First, God's work for us in Christ; and,

Second, God's work in us by the Holy Spirit.

The gospel is about what God did for us, outside of us, an extrinsic to us at Calvary that results in our justification -- God's redemptive act in Christ; but, God also does a work in side of us by the Holy Spirit which is called "regeneration," "renewal," and "sanctification."

These two acts must never be confused, co-mingled, or compounded! Moreover, the two must never be divorced one from another.

While faith must rest on the objective of God in Christ, faith always results in the Holy Spirit renewing and sanctifying the inner man.

Illustration: If you try to balance a long pole on your finger you can do it if you keep your eye on top of the pole, but if you take your eye off the top of the pole to watch your finger, it will fall every time (Present Truth).

Likewise, when a believer looks away from self to Christ and what He has done for him at Calvary, he has balance in his life; but, if a man takes his eyes off Christ and makes his experience the focus of his concern, he plunges into wretched subjectivism.

Medieval Subjectivism

The tendency of human nature is to look away from Christ and the cross and focus on the Holy Spirit and the heart. Likewise, so-called “Christian organizations” are often drowning in a sea of subjectivism.

This is what happened prior to the Reformation. Pious souls looked inside their defiled hearts to find evidence they were right with God only to discover sins of the conscience begging for attention.

The church took its eyes off the Savior and His shed blood and focused on the imperfections of the human heart . . . even trying to eradicate the principle of sin by fasting, flagellations, and forfeiture of earthly pleasures.

Theologically, the church drifted away from the Bible and justification by faith. Sailing into to the dark sea of subjective experience, the locus of grace shifted from the cross to the human heart. Men became obsessed with human experience and defects in the soul – with defects in the inner man.

Eyes turned inward.

Churchmen no longer ask, what did Christ accomplish for us at Calvary? Rather, the question became, “What kind of progress are you making on becoming holy, pure, and good in your heart?

A modern parallel would be pop psychology. Psychologists query the troubled asking, "How do you feel?" -- taking them inward to explore the dark world of self. None ask burden souls, "What did Christ accomplish at Calvary for you?" taking them outward to explore the awe and wonder of redemption.

During the medieval period, justification became dependent on sanctification. Salvation depended on the progress of holiness. Men no longer asked, “What Christ did for me?”, but “What is the Spirit doing in me?” The questions, "Why can't I get better? Why am I so sinful?" haunted many souls.

Consequently men began to focus on the work of the Holy Spirit within and mystical ways to mortify sin poisoning the heart.

Martin Luther, a Roman Catholic monk, traumatized by his own sin fasted days on end, put pebbles in his sandals, and wore twisted strands of rope under his cloak next to his skin so he could feel pain in order to obtain some type of freedom from sin.

Men became so afflicted by guilt and so obsessed with purgations, the Roman Catholic Church made a killing on selling indulgences to subjective souls with bleeding bodies.

The pursuit of extra ordinary religious experiences became the great passion of the medieval church. Men picked up crosses and traveled through Europe. Some sat on poles. Others looked for magic in holy relics. Many lived in caves as elusive monks. Society, instead of going forward, sunk in the abyss of subjectivism.

The church did not forsake Biblical doctrines like justification and sanctification. Rather, definitions changed. Values changed. Focus changed. What was happening on the inside with the help of the Spirit became more important than what Christ accomplished outside of us and for us at Calvary.

During the days of Martin Luther, the church rediscovered Paul.

As Luther studied Romans he utterly rejected the church's teaching that the central work of God was within men making them good enough so they could be accepted in His sight.

To Luther, God's grace was not so much His work within the heart of man, but His work of redemption at the cross. He saw that no man could obtain enough grace to purify his soul from sin. Justifying grace was not righteousness infused into the heart, but the righteousness of Christ credited to the account of those who put their faith in the Savior (Romans 4).

Luther understood the pole - finger analogy experientially. Take your eyes off the accomplishments of Christ on the cross and focus on the Holy Spirit at work in the heart and you will plunge into a pit of wretched subjectivism.

A Contrast Between the Medieval Church and the Reformation

The contrast between the medieval church and the Reformation may be summarized as follows:

Medieval: The locus of grace is the human heart.

Reformation: The locus of grace is in Christ at the cross.

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Medieval: Justification is a creative work of the Spirit wherein he creates righteousness in the heart.

Reformation: Justification is God declaring a man righteous because of Christ's doing and dying for us.

_____

Medieval: Justification involves adding our works to the work of Christ.

Reformation: Men are justified by faith alone (sola fide).

_____

Medieval: Righteousness must be infused into the heart for a man to be justified.

Reformation: Righteousness is imputed to the man who believes.

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The Reformers considered themselves Catholic, but not Roman Catholic.

Rome emphasized the new birth and the work of the Spirit in the heart. The Reformers emphasized the work of Christ on the cross outside of them.

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Rome accepted self-punishment and self-flagellation as a means of atonement.

The Reformers insisted that Christ's obedience to God's law and his vicarious sufferings at Calvary was the atonement sufficient to satisfy the claims of a holy God on behalf of believing men (Romans 3:24-26).

More on the gospel of Rome

Rome emphasized religious disciplines to purge the heart from sin. The Reformers taught the shed blood of Christ is sufficient to redeem men from the penalty of sin.

Rome made salvation dependent on the "new birth" and the creation of righteousness in the heart by the Holy Spirit. The Reformers did **not** deny the Spirit's work in the heart, they just refused to make justification dependent on it.

Rome saw justification as a creative act of the Spirit within the heart of man. The Reformers saw justification as a judicial act whereby Heaven's Court declared a man righteous due to his faith in Christ.

Rome insisted on the fruit of holiness within the man before he could be justified. The Reformers believed justification had to be separated from sanctification; that justification is **not** dependent on sanctification; that Christ work on the cross is the cause of forgiveness and that Christ's obedience to God's law is the source of righteousness; that men are saved by faith alone, and **not** by faith plus our works.

Rome did not believe a man was saved by human works. Rather, Rome taught a person was saved by faith plus works. The Reformers believe a man was saved by works alone--Christ's works on behalf the believer (sola fide, sola Christo).

Rome believed that justification was dependent on man's cooperation with the Spirit to be holy. The Reformers insisted that justification was dependent on faith alone (sola fide).

Rome made no distinction between justification and sanctification. The Reformers separated justification from sanctification as two distinct saving acts of God with different means and different ends.

Rome taught men had to invite Christ as a divine Person into their hearts to be saved. The Reformers emphasized "that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

Following the post Reformation era, **John Newman** and others merged the two theologies claiming that justification was both a creative act and a declarative act. Consequently, many so called "Christian Organizations" jumped on Newman's wagon forging a path back to Rome.

At stake in the Reformation was the glory of Christ, and the troubled consciences of men.

During the Reformation Christ received the glory and souls found rest in His work: "There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ" (Romans 8:1).

Thus, sola Christo, sola fide, sola gratia, sola gloria, and sola Scripture became the great summary proclamations of the Reformation.

Are you Catholic in your thinking or are your Reformed in your thinking? The Reformers felt that one's eternal destiny was determined by the accuracy of one's faith – faith in the doing and dying of Christ and not on what or what not happening in the human heart.

_____

Answer Key to the above Questions

Question One: Rome says "Yes" and the Reformers said "No."

Question Two: Rome says "Yes" and the Reformers said "No."

Question Three: Rome says "Yes" and the Reformers said "No."

These questions, their answers, and the discussion above first appeared in Present Truth Magazine in 1972, later changed to Verdict Magazine.

The Council of Trent

Decree on Reformation

CHAPTER I. It is meet that prelates reside in their own churches; if they act otherwise, the penalties of the ancient law are renewed against them, and fresh penalties decreed [...]

CHAPTER II. It is not lawful for any one who holds a benefice requiring personal residence to absent himself, save for a just cause to be approved of by the bishop, who even then shall, for the cure of souls, substitute a vicar in his stead, withdrawing a portion of the fruits [...]

CHAPTER IV. Bishops and other greater prelates shall visit any churches whatsoever, as often as there shall be need; everything which might hinder this decree being abrogated.

Decree Concerning Purgatory

Whereas the Catholic Church, instructed by the Holy Ghost, has, from the sacred writings and the ancient tradition of the Fathers, taught, in sacred councils, and very recently in this ecumenical Synod, that there is a Purgatory, and that the souls there detained are helped by the suffrages of the faithful, but principally by the acceptable sacrifice of the altar; the holy Synod enjoins on bishops that they diligently endeavor that the sound doctrine concerning Purgatory, transmitted by the holy Fathers and sacred councils, be believed,

maintained, taught, and everywhere proclaimed by the faithful of Christ. But let the more difficult and subtle questions, and which tend not to edification, and from which for the most part there is no increase of piety, be excluded from popular discourses before the uneducated multitude. [...] [And] let the bishops take care, that the suffrages of the faithful who are living, to wit the sacrifices of masses, prayers, alms, and other works of piety, which have been wont to be performed by the faithful for the other faithful departed, be piously and devoutly performed, in accordance with the institutes of the church; and that whatsoever is due on their behalf, from the endowments of testators, or in other way, be discharged, not in a perfunctory manner, but diligently and accurately, by the priests and ministers of the church, and others who are bound to render this (service).

Decree Concerning Indulgences

Whereas the power of conferring Indulgences was granted by Christ to the Church; and she has, even in the most ancient times, used the said power, delivered unto her of God; the sacred holy Synod teaches, and enjoins, that the use of Indulgences, for the Christian people most salutary, and approved of by the authority of sacred Councils, is to be retained in the Church; and It condemns with anathema those who either assert, that they are useless; or who deny that there is in the Church the power of granting them. In granting them, however, it desires that, in accordance with the ancient and approved custom in the Church, moderation be observed; lest, by excessive facility, ecclesiastical discipline be enervated. And being desirous that the abuses which have crept therein, and by occasion of which this honorable name of Indulgences is blasphemed by heretics, be amended and corrected, It ordains generally by this decree, that all evil gains for the obtaining thereof,--whence a most prolific cause of abuses amongst the Christian people has been derived,--be wholly abolished. But as regards the other abuses which have proceeded from superstition, ignorance, irreverence, or from whatsoever other source, since, by reason of the manifold corruptions in the places and provinces where the said abuses are committed, they cannot conveniently be specially prohibited; It commands all bishops, diligently to collect, each in his own church, all abuses of this nature, and to report them in the first provincial Synod; that, after having been reviewed by the opinions of the other bishops also, they may forthwith be referred to the Sovereign Roman Pontiff, by whose authority and prudence that which may be expedient for the universal Church will be ordained; that this the gift of holy Indulgences may be dispensed to all the faithful, piously, holily, and incorruptly.

Source: https://pages.uoregon.edu/dluebke/Reformations441/CouncilofTrent--Excerpts.html#:~:text=CANON%20IV.-

,If%20any%20one%20says%2C%20that%20the%20sacraments%20of%20the%20New

12. Luther's Rose

The Luther seal or Luther rose has become familiar to almost all Lutherans. The seal is important because it is a depiction of Luther's theology. Luther gave this explanation of it in a letter dated July 8, 1530:

"There is first to be a cross, black and placed in a heart, which should be of its natural color, so that I myself would be **reminded that faith in the Crucified saves us.** For if one believes from the heart he will be justified. Even though it is a black cross, which mortifies and which also should hurt us, yet it leaves the heart in its natural color and does not ruin nature; that is, the cross does not kill but keeps man alive. **For the just man lives by faith, but by faith in the Crucified One.** Such a heart is to be in the midst of a white rose, to symbolize that faith gives joy, comfort, and peace; in a word it places the believer into a white joyful rose; for this faith does not give peace and joy as the world gives and, therefore, the rose is to be white and not red, for white is the color of the spirits and of all the angels. Such a rose is to be in a sky-blue field, symbolizing that such joy in the Spirit and in faith is a beginning of the future heavenly joy; it is already a part of faith, and is grasped through hope, even though not yet manifest. And around this field is a golden ring, symbolizing that in heaven such blessedness lasts forever and has no end, and in addition is precious beyond all joy and goods, just as gold is the most valuable and precious metal.

Source: The Symbol of the Reformation: Luther's Rose courtesy of King of Grace Lutheran Church - https://www.kingofgracelutheran.com/blog/the-symbol-of-the-reformation-luthers-rose

13. The Crux of the Reformation

Towards and Accurate Gospel

Accounted righteous; or, infused with righteousness?

Romans 4:5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

Q: Is a man justified by being born again, or is a man justified, then born again?

Q: Does God justify a man because he changes, or does change follow a man's change in legal status before God?

The Roman Catholic argues that a man must be born again to be right with God; but, the Reformers taught that God justifies the believer first, then sanctifies the man.

The **Council of Trent** asserted that God justifies that which He creates, and condemned the Reformation doctrine that God justifies, then creates.

Figure 5: Freepik

The Reformers understood that justification is **not** both a declaration and a creation; it is ***not*** both objective and subjective; it is **not** both external and internal.

- Justification means *to declare just* (objective righteousness).
- Sanctification means *to make just* (subjective righteousness).

The righteousness of justification is external. It is declarative. It is **not** internal and creative.

Reasoning: When one glorifies God, he does **not** make God glorious. He declares him to be glorious. When one declares God just, he does **not** make Him just. He announces his Justice. When God justifies a man, it is **not** an act that produces righteousness; but an act that declares a man right in His sight.

Looking at the persons are who are justified in the New Testament (NT): There are two types of persons who are justified in the NT: either (a) the perfectly righteous individual, either the perfect God or perfect man, and (b) the ungodly man.

JUSTIFICATION OF THE PERFECT GOD.

1 Corinthians 15:1 And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John.

This is the justification of a perfect God. The people did not make Him righteous, but they did declare Him to be righteous.

JUSTIFICATION OF THE PERFECT MAN

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory (1 Timothy 3:16).

Christ is declared to be righteous, not made righteous. See also (Acts 3:14; 22:14; 1 John 2:1).

JUSTIFICATION OF THE IMPERFECT MAN

Romans 4:5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

Justification happens to the ungodly, not the godly. It is a declarative work, not a creative work; it is reckoning not an infusing of righteousness to those who believe.

Looking at the antithesis of justification: The opposite of "to justify" is not "to deprave" but "to condemn." If "to justify" meant "to make holy" the antithesis would infer that condemnation means "to make unholy." Surely, this is not the case.

Through Adam's disobedience many were made sinners (Romans 5:19). Adam was judicially condemned, and because of man's connection with Adam, all men are condemned. This is true for salvation as well as the propagation of sin. Through the obedience of Christ, many were made righteous–not by creation, but by declaration. Because of our connection with Christ, we are judicially declared righteous–thus, we gain a legal standing with God through faith.

Just as condemnation does **not** mean "making wicked," so justification does not mean "making good." Justification means "to acquit" **not** "to make holy."

Looking at the equivalent expressions:

In John 3:18, the reward for believing is not purification, but non-condemnation.

In John 5:24, believing in Him is said to bring freedom, not from corruption, but freedom from condemnation.

In 2 Corinthians 5:19-21, the work of reconciliation is explained appositionally, not as purifying men from sins, but as not counting men's sins against them. Justification is the non-imputation of sin. Sin was imputed to Christ forensically. It does not mean sin was imparted to Him, but imputed to Him. He was not made sinful! He was declared sinful.

How then are we made righteous before God? It is not by impartation of righteousness but by imputation of the righteousness of Christ to our account. And, the co-mingling of the two is the error of the Catholic Church. Paxton explains:

The Council of Trent (1545) and some of her devotees after her have fallen into the terrible mistake of making one figure represent two inseparable but quite different things—pardon and renewal, deliverance from the penalty of sin and deliverance from the power of sin. The council declared that justification consists both of remission and internal renovation (Paxton).

Looking at definitions: *To ascribe justification as an act of making holy is to give justification the same meaning as sanctification.*

In Catholicism justification and sanctification become synonymous. But, this merging of definition is incorrect in the following ways:

- Justification is objective; sanctification is subjective.
- Justification is forensic; sanctification is experiential.
- Justification means to declare holy; sanctification means to make holy.
- Justification is external (in God's mind); sanctification is internal (man's spirit).
- Justification is based on the work of Christ; sanctification the work of the Spirit.

While we make a distinction between justification and sanctification, we must also recognize they are linked. They are **not** synonymous, but they are related! When God declares a man righteous (justification), he proceeds to make him righteous (sanctification). When God justifies a man, he then proceeds to regenerate the man. But, justification is first, "being born again" is second . . . and the two concepts must be kept separate even though they happen simultaneously from man's perspective.

To speak of justification in the sense of "*to make holy*" is to give justification the same meaning as sanctification has in the greater portion of the Scriptures. Justification and sanctification become synonymous; both mean "to make holy." What in the Scriptures is meant to signify an outward deliverance from the

penalty of sin (justification) is made to signify an inward deliverance from the power of sin (sanctification). This is the official position of the Church of Rome. What the Bible teaches as a judicial process Rome has made an infusion of a quality. However, the judicial process and the infusion of a quality are different things indeed! (Paxton)

The human heart seems to be either apathetic about God, restless about God, or at peace with God.

If justification depends on becoming a righteous person, then our justification would be based on the quality of our spiritual development. We would be preaching personal works, not faith in the works of Christ. It would base salvation on a change of character inside us by God's Spirit rather than on God's work outside of us through Christ at Calvary.

While we make a distinction between justification and sanctification, and justification and regeneration, we also recognize they are hinged together. *They are not synonymous, but they are related*. We do not deny the necessity of the new birth (regeneration), but we are implying a logical necessity when we say that justification precedes a change in character. A change of character follows justification, but it is **not** the basis of justification. When God declares a man righteous (justification), he proceeds to make him into a righteous person (sanctification).

Luther, Calvin, and the Reformers concluded: *A man is first justified, then regenerated in nature; justified, then sanctified.*

The counter-reformationists focused the eyes of Catholics on their own heart causing them to be trapped in religious subjectivism; the Reformers sought to free men from the black hole of subjectivism by focusing men on Christ and His accomplishments for them at Calvary.

Are you Catholic in your thinking or are your Reformed in your thinking? The Reformers felt that one's eternal destiny was determined by the accuracy of one's faith – faith in the doing and dying of Christ and **not** in our doing and our becoming.

14. The Counter-Reformation

And the Council of Trent on Justification

The Council of Trent was a counter-reformation congress organized by Rome to define and defeat the Reformers – a movement that was deeply subjective.

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Sixth Session (13 January 1547)

Decree on Justification

CANON I. If any one says, that man may be justified before God by his own works, whether done through the teaching of human nature, or that of the law, without the grace of God through Jesus Christ; let him be anathema [...].

CANON III. If any one says, that without the prevenient inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and without his help, man can believe, hope, love, or be penitent as he ought, so as that the grace of Justification may be bestowed upon him; let him be anathema.

CANON IV. If any one says, that man's free will moved and excited by God, by assenting to God exciting and calling, in no wise cooperates towards disposing and preparing itself for obtaining the grace of Justification; that it cannot refuse its consent, if it would, but that, as something inanimate, it does nothing whatever and is merely passive; let him be anathema.

CANON V. If any one says, that, since Adam's sin, the free will of man is lost and extinguished; or, that it is a thing with only a name, yea a name without a reality, a figment, in fine, introduced into the Church by Satan; let him be anathema [...].

CANON VII. If any one says, that all works done before Justification, in whatsoever way they be done, are truly sins, or merit the hatred of God; or that the more earnestly one strives to dispose himself for grace, the more grievously he sins: let him be anathema [...].

CANON XI. If any one says, that men are justified, either by the sole imputation of the justice of Christ, or by the sole remission of sins, to the exclusion of the grace and the charity which is poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, and is inherent in them; or even that the grace, whereby we are justified, is only the favor of God; let him be anathema. [...]

CANON XIV. If any one says, that man is truly absolved from his sins and justified, because that he assuredly believed himself absolved and justified; or, that no one is truly justified but he who believes himself justified; and that, by this faith alone, absolution and justification are effected; let him be anathema.

CANON XV. If any one says, that a man, who is born again and justified, is bound of faith to believe that he is assuredly in the number of the predestinate; let him be anathema [...]

CANON XVII. If any one says, that the grace of Justification is only attained to by those who are predestined unto life; but that all others who are called, are called indeed, but receive not grace, as being, by the divine power, predestined unto evil; let him be anathema.

CANON XVIII. If any one says, that the commandments of God are, even for one that is justified and constituted in grace, impossible to keep; let him be anathema.

CANON XIX. If any one says, that nothing besides faith is commanded in the Gospel; that other things are indifferent, neither commanded nor prohibited, but free; or, that the ten commandments nowise appertain to Christians; let him be anathema.

CANON XX. If any one says, that the man who is justified and how perfect soever, is not bound to observe the commandments of God and of the Church, but only to believe; as if indeed the Gospel were a bare and absolute promise of eternal life, without the condition of observing the commandments ; let him be anathema [...]

Decree on Reformation

CHAPTER I. It is meet that prelates reside in their own churches; if they act otherwise, the penalties of the ancient law are renewed against them, and fresh penalties decreed [...]

CHAPTER II. It is not lawful for any one who holds a benefice requiring personal residence to absent himself, save for a just cause to be approved of by the bishop, who even then shall, for the cure of souls, substitute a vicar in his stead, withdrawing a portion of the fruits [...]

CHAPTER IV. Bishops and other greater prelates shall visit any churches whatsoever, as often as there shall be need; everything which might hinder this decree being abrogated.

15. The Definition of Justification

Abraham and Justification

Before us is a man who had "lifted up his hand to the LORD God Most High, Creator of Heaven and Earth" and his justification before Him (Genesis 14:22).

Abraham was God-centered and not man-centered.

Genesis 15:6 And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

Meaning of the term "Justification"

The words *justified* and *righteous* are from the same Greek word [*dikaiosis*, a noun; *dikaios*, an adjective]. When used as a noun, *dikaiosis* can be translated justification or righteous or righteousness. When used as a verb, *dikaio* can be translated "to make righteous," "declare righteous," or "to justify."

Justification is a judicial, forensic term. That is, it is a legal word associated with courts of law. In the Biblical sense, it is a word associated with one's standing in God's court. In America's courts a man is declared "guilty" or "not guilty;" but, in God's court a man was declared "righteous" or "guilty" (*hupdikos*) which means "under judgment" (Romans 3:19).

The gospel can come to us in the horticultural model [vine and branches], or the pastoral model [shepherd and sheep], or the human-relations model [forgiveness and reconciliation], or the biological model [the new birth], or the sanctuary model [propitiation], or the medical model [healing], but Paul uses **the legal model** [justification v. guilty] to explain salvation in Romans.

Justification is an eschatological word. That is, it is associated with the judgment of God. Since it is appointed to man once to die and after this the judgment [Hebrews 10:27], and since God's judgment is an event associated with the Eschaton [Revelation 20:10ff, justification is an eschatological concept.

Justification is a biblical term primarily discussed in the Book of Romans, Paul's legal treatise on the Gospel of Christ [Romans 1:16].

Justification is opposite that of "condemnation" (*katakrima* = a sentence of damnation) [Romans 5:16]. It has to do with one's standing in a court of law. Once the verdict is passed, one will either be condemned or justified. The judicial verdict [justified] remains distinct from inner healing [regeneration].

Justification does <u>not</u> mean "just-as-if-I-had-never-sinned," or "to be made into an innocent person." This would place a man on the ground of Adam making it possible to fall from grace. A state of innocence is not desirable because it is only a matter of time before the innocent sins again.

Justification does <u>not</u> mean "to be forgiven" or "to be pardoned." Forgiveness is the cancellation of debts. While a sinner does need to have his debts pardoned, he needs much more. He needs righteousness deposited into his account.

Justification does <u>not</u> mean "just-as-if-I-had-died." This cute aphorism implies freedom from punishment via substitution. Justification is less about

substitution and more about imputation. It is not so much about punishment of sin as it about the gift of positive righteousness.

Justification does <u>not</u> mean "to be put on probation." Violation of probation can cause one to be placed back under the penal system. What is needed for the sinner is not probation but justification.

Justification does <u>not</u> mean "to be born again" or "to be regenerated." Regeneration is a creative act, while justification is a legal act—a verdict, a decree, a judicial decision, a Court order. Regeneration and justification must be seen as two distinct effects of the gospel.

Justification does <u>not</u> mean "to be made holy." Justification is **<u>not</u>** an ontological[2] quality or a personal attribute; it is a forensic declaration. We must make a distinction between the work of Christ for us, and the work of the Holy Spirit in us. To fail to preserve a distinction between justification by Christ's substitutionary work for us and the sanctifying work of the Spirit in us confuses the gospel with law, and the righteous of the Creator with the righteousness of man.

Justification or "righteousness" does <u>not</u> mean "godliness." Justification does not change the object to satisfy the Court, but it does change how the Court regards the object. What changes is status, **<u>not</u>** being.

Justification is <u>not</u> pitted against law. While a person is not saved by "law keeping," justification places the believer in right standing to law to the God of the law. Because Christ kept the law, God is able to justify the believer. And, once justified, the sinner is then given His Spirit so he has the power to keep the law (Romans 8:4).

Justification does <u>not</u> mean to make righteous. Andreas Osiander, the German pastor who opposed Luther, contended that God must make a man righteous so he can declare a man righteous. He proposed that Christ indwells the believer with His divine righteousness then proceeds to make him righteous. If such be the case, the question is, "how good do I have to become in order to be justified?" Such a system is slavery, and it binds a man to sycophant service to God. Justification means that a person has a righteous standing in a court of law, not that he is made righteous in order to be declared righteous [Cited by Verdict, Vol. 2, No. 6, p. 12].

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[2] Ontological: Ontology (from onto-ὄντος or "being; that which is," present participle of the verb εἰμί"be"-logia: the philosophical study of the nature of being, of existence, of reality..

Justification is <u>not</u> the same as sanctification. While sanctification follows justification, imputed righteousness is distinct from imparted righteousness. External justification must not be confounded with inner transformation.

Justification is a forensic term, i.e., a legal averment pertaining to the courts. It comes from the Latin word *forensia* and means "before the forum" or "before the bar." It is a declaration by a court that an accused has a right standing in the sight of the law. Justify [dikaiw,sei, *dikaioo*] means "*to show to be righteous,*" "*or to put into a right relationship with God*." It is an action of the court [Deuteronomy 25:1]. The positive side of justification is to "be declared righteous." The negative side of the judicial decision is *unimputed* sin or to be declared condemned [Deuteronomy 32:1, 2].

<u>Definition</u>

Theologically, justification means to be declared righteous by a court of law. Furthermore, the believer needs to understand that just as our sins were imputed to Christ, His righteousness is imputed to us who believe.

Justification, therefore, is the judicial act of God whereby He declares a man righteous and treats him as such.

Biblically speaking, it is important to understand that the court's declaration of "*justification*" does **<u>not</u>** change the object to satisfy the demands of law, **<u>but</u>** it does change how the object is regarded in the eyes of the law. While *regeneration* creates a change in character and is an act of a Father, *justification* changes one's status by an act of a Judge. The renewal of regeneration, which follows justification, must **<u>not</u>** be confounded with justification.

<u>Luther reasoned:</u>

> *A capuchin says: wear a gray coat and a hood, a rope round thy body, and sandals on thy feet. A cordelier says: put on a black hood; an ordinary papist says: do this or that work, hear mass, pray, fast, give alms, etc. But a true Christian says: I am justified and saved only by faith in Christ, without any works or merits of my own; compare these together, and judge which is the true righteousness [306]. (Luther)*

The Formula of Concord [1577] put it this way:

> *Concerning the righteousness of faith before God we believe, teach, and confess unanimously, in accordance with the comprehensive summary of our faith and confession presented above, that poor sinful man is justified before God, that is, absolved and declared free and exempt from all his sins, and from the sentence of well-deserved condemnation, and adopted into sonship and heirship of eternal life, without any merit or worth of our own, also without any preceding, present, or any subsequent works, out of pure grace, because of the sole merit, complete*

obedience, bitter suffering, death, and resurrection of our Lord Christ alone, whose obedience is reckoned to us for righteousness [Article III, no. 9].

The Justification of Abraham

In Genesis 15 Abraham was scared spitless that the five marauding kings he defeated in his rescue of Lot would return and retaliate against his household. Wanting assurance of God's favor, he prayed. Here Abraham received an answer from the High Court of Heaven. God gave him a verdict. Abraham believed God and the Judge declared him judicially righteous in his sight. What a blessing! What a comfort! What revelation!

Genesis 15:6 And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

The declaration was a comfort to Abraham, but it immediately raises the question: What if I blow it? What if I sin in the future? How will God treat me?

Justification encompasses more than being declared righteous; ***it also involves being treated as righteous by the Court***.

In Genesis 20, we see how God treated Abraham when he deceived an eastern prince. When Abimelech, King of Gerar, eyed Sarah and sought to procure her for his harem, Abraham instructed Sarah to say, "I am the sister of Abraham." Such a strategy was designed to keep powerful kings from assassinating Abraham in order to take Sarah as a wife. Governments often use intimidation and coercion to obtain what they want. Out of fear and weakness, Abraham lied to protect Sarah[3] and Abimelech, out of ignorance, took Sarah into his harem. A man does **not** owe the truth to an abuser of truth. From the story we learn that Abraham deliberately, consciously misled the king. Abimelech believed Sarah and innocently took her into his harem. But . . .

- It was Abimelech who was judged, **not** Abraham.
- It was Abimelech who was rebuked, **not** Abraham.
- It was Abimelech who was in danger of capital punishment, **not** Abraham.
- It was Abimelech whose life was in danger, **not** Abraham.
- It was Abimelech's household that needed healing, and **not** Abraham's.
- It was Abimelech who needed prayer, **not** Abraham.
- It was Abraham who prayed for Abimelech's healing.

[3] Abraham lied to Abimelech, but God did not condemn him for it. No one owes the truth to a tyrant who will abuse the truth.

- From this Biblical story we learn that when God declares a man righteous, he also treats him as such!! Selah!

The gospel of Abraham is that to be right with God, one must believe him; and, if one believes Him, he will have a right standing with God and be treated as a righteous man.

The New Testament put it this way:

> *Romans 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:*

Want a right standing with God? Investigate Calvary; discern what happened there; and believe it.

Cruci Dum Spiro Fido

(Source: Stockton, "Five Pillars of the Gospel", unpublished seminary lecture **not**es for New Testament Theology)

16. Justification by Blood

Blood is the Currency of the Spirit World

Understanding the Blood in the Gospel of Christ

Figure 6: PNG Free Download

Romans 5:9 Much more then, being now <u>justified by his blood</u>, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

Hebrews 9:22 And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

According to the gospel we are justified by faith (Romans 5:1), by grace (Romans 2:24), and by works (James 2:24). But, this text informs us that men are ***justified by blood***. In this context, the blood is the legal basis of justification – the judicial reason God can redeem men and declare them just in His sight.

<u>Blood is the currency of the spirit-world.</u>

The difference between Talmudic Judaism, Islam, the pantheistic cults, and Christianity is that Christianity teaches that blood, not good deeds, is the currency that must be paid to redeem the soul.

Christianity is a bloody religion through and through. In ancient Israel, blood flowed like a river from the temple into the Kidron Valley. Hundreds of thousands of lambs, birds, goats, and bulls spilled their blood at the site.

From the animals killed to provide clothing for Adam and Eve (Genesis 3) to the death of Christ (John 18-19), the Scripture teaches one fundamental truth: Blood must be shed to pay for sin! Blood must be on the altar to gain acceptance before the LORD God of the Bible.

God is just, and He cannot ignore, whitewash, avoid, overlook, or turn a blind eye to transgressions against His law. Blood is the only currency received by the Great Spirit in exchange for the soul.

Modern man with his love of money and psychological gimmicks fall short of achieving his spiritual ambitions because he fails to grasp that blood is the only lawful tender accepted between spirits and mortals. Talmudic Jews substitute prayer for propitiatory blood sacrifice. Muslims practice the five pillars of Islam: faith, prayer, alms giving, fasting, and treks to Mecca. Hindus believe *karma marga* (works) is the way of salvation.

Humanly speaking, blood is a powerful subject.

There is something in all of us that causes us to react to blood. The sight of that bright red fluid -- whether it was coming from an enemy or friend or yourself – provokes fear and awe. Hemophobia is the fear of blood. Blood is associated with such powerful concepts that some people can't stand the sight of it. Many faint at the sight of a bloody scene.

Blood is life. Blood is power and vitality—when you push yourself, your heart pounds and your pulse races as your blood rushes to supply oxygen to exhausted cells. A woman bleeds during her menstrual cycle, there's blood at childbirth. A drop of blood is your human signature. Your blood contains DNA and not only identifies your individual characteristics, but your entire family history. If you donate blood you might be saving someone's life. Blood banks are the first aid of life. Transfusion saves lives.

> *Genesis 9:4 But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat.*
>
> *Leviticus 17:11 For the life of the flesh is in the blood:*

Even in the French Quarter of New Orleans where Voodoo Queens practice love spells and curses, necromancers understand that to summon the gods of the underworld, blood must be mixed with frog hairs and toenails to attract the spirits.

Blood magic is the use of a few drops of blood, usually your own, to summon the gods of power. Even ancient Egyptians understood that mediation between

the goat-gods and man required blood—lots of blood. Drinking blood, washing in blood, and sprinkling blood on symbolic objects guaranteed the Grand Zombie access to demonic powers.

Blood is associated with death on the battlefield, the slaughter of animals, cycles of fertility, and pagan rituals wherein occultist bath in blood or offer blood up to spirits of power.

But, modern man seems oblivious to the necessity of blood redemption.

The only legal tender Americans understand are worthless FRNs and Citibank Credit Cards. "Money" is the American religion. After all, every dollar boasts it is backed by "the full faith and credit" of the U.S. government--a bankrupt corporation at that! To many Americans, FRNs can buy anything, even favors with God. In love with gold-platinum credit cards, BMWs, and dollar bills, the average U.S. citizen hopes to gain power by spending himself into debt, by devoting himself to yoga exercises, and by using psychedelic drugs to engage the spirit world.

In the month of May 2018, Breitbart News reported that people were leaving Illinois in droves because of high taxes. "So, how is the state's legislature reacting to the tens of thousands of constituents leaving every year over high taxes? Well, legislators are proposing a massive tax hike, naturally."

Even in the Christian community, people pray the rosary, offer money in exchange for spiritual favors, and practice oil anointing in hopes of contracting for power in the spirit world. But, why would a spirit be interested in gold or silver or those worthless green FRNs with of dead presidents?

Will Americans wake up and realize that blood is the currency of the spirit world; that only by blood can men escape the penalties of their naked arrogance, shameful lusts, and outbursts of anger?

Gold and silver are of no interest to the Eternal Spirit . . . but blood?

The Great Spirit is attracted to blood . . . the blood of Abel's lamb . . . and the shed blood of Abel . . . and most importantly, the blood of Christ.

Notice that blood speaks to the Almighty; that blood is of utmost interest to the Great Spirit; ***that blood speaks***.

> *Genesis 4:10 "And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground."*

Hebrews 12:24 "the blood of Jesus speaketh better things than that of Abel."

The blood of Abel's lamb cried out for pardon; the blood of Abel cried out for vengeance upon his murderer. But, the blood of Christ cries out "*forgiveness*" for trusting sinners.

Which raises the question: How can a transgressor appease the offended Spirit he has neglected all his life? How can a proud miscreant who has plunged into sensuality, fornication, and abominable idolatries be reconciled with his Creator?

The Bible from beginning to the end drills in one truth. Blood has to be brought to the altar. Blood is the only currency recognized in the spirit world. Blood is the only consideration accepted for a contract. The rituals of religion won't do. Feeling sorry for your wicked deeds can't buy spit. Saying "I'm sorry" to an offended Spirit will get you thrown into hell.

Cain was a farmer. Cain's offered vegetables to God and was rejected. Abel was a shepherd. Abel offered the blood of a lamb and found acceptance (Genesis 4).

Cain put his hope in his own merits; Abel trusted the merits of Another – in a substitute lamb just like Adam and Eve had taught him when God clothed them from freshly slain lambs.

From this account we learn there are only two religions in the world--(1) the religion of beans, beets, and broccoli--a religion of works; and (2) the religion of blood redemption. Judaism, Islam, and the pantheistic faiths are based on the belief that one's good deeds commend a man to God; that is, they follow the way of Cain and practice a vegetable religion. Christianity is based on the blood sacrifice of the Son of which all the Levitical sacrifices are a type.

The only tender accepted for ransom is blood . . . and a very special kind of blood--innocent blood, pure blood, sinless blood! Is there such a rare treasure as this? Yes, there is!

In His grace and mercy, the great Spirit offered the blood of His Son as currency for redemption:

> *"knowing that you were ransomed from the corruptible ways inherited from your forefathers, not with worthless things like silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or defect" - 1 Peter 1:19.*

Therefore, if you are trusting in your money or religious rituals or feeble beliefs that you are not that bad of a person, flee to the cross and lay hold of the horns on the altar. Plead the blood of Christ might be applied as payment for your sins. "Understand" ("stand under") the blood of the Lamb and its authority. It is the only currency accepted in the spirit world.

This is our gospel.

17. Justification and Forensic Righteousness

Figure 7: Art Explosions

In the world of ideas, the enemy chips away at the central truth of the gospel: **Sola fide** --that men are justified by faith in the doing and dying of Christ and nothing else.

Romans 1:16 "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."

Romans 3:21-22 "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; 22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith (faithfulness) of Jesus Christ (to obey the law) unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

Thus, the apostle proclaimed a **forensic righteousness** wherein man can find a right standing in the Court of Heaven based on the works of Another.

> *To look away to a righteousness found wholly in Another and in what Another has done, to stake one's precious all upon the history of Another, is the negation of human pride and self-centeredness, (Verdict, Lutherans in Crisis over Justification by Faith, p. 21).*

By forensic, ***we refer to Christ not only discharging our debt before God at Calvary, but of Christ having obeyed the law on our behalf to complete a legal responsibility men have to the Cour***t.

Salvation could be explained horticulturally, pastorally, medicinally, or biologically, but the Spirit calls us to put on law glasses and to inspect the legal framework of the gospel.

God is in the business not only of saving people, ***but of saving them justly without compromising the legal standards of the Court***. His power to save men is not raw might oblivious to what is right, it is might that springs from right (Verdict Magazine).

Men are **not** saved by law; they are ***saved by the works of Christ in conformity with law***. Love can only be love if it is grounded in uncompromising justice.

The opposite of law is ***not*** *love, but lawlessness; and the opposite of love is* ***not*** *law, but permissiveness.*

Theology without law is like a body without bones.

By forensic, we refer to Christ fulfilling the responsibilities of the covenant on our behalf as our Representative. If it was any other way, the center of the gospel would not be justification, but moral renewal. Thus, the gospel is about a righteousness in conformity to law that is available to all who believe.

By forensic, we mean this righteousness is completely outside of our experience. It is not something done by us, to us, or in us.

By forensic, we claim the righteousness that the poor sinner pleads before the Heavenly Tribunal is none other than the holy obedience of Christ and His vicarious suffering as our Substitute and Representative.

By forensic, we refer to our acceptance of the Mediatorial work of Christ as God's Representative / Mediator to us, and Christ as our Representative to God.

By forensic, we refer to justification as a declaring a man righteous, and **NOT** making a man righteous.

By forensic, we mean the sinner's problem is **not** only corruption in the man, **but** condemnation before the Court.

Justification deals with man's condemnation in the eyes of the Court; regeneration addresses the power of sin that leads to corruption. The purpose of justification is to give a man a right standing before the Court; the purpose of regeneration is to break the power of sin over the man.

By forensic, we refer to God's judicial remedy by an exercise of law (at the cross) and **NOT** a medicinal / spiritual / prophylactic remedy by an application of the Holy Spirit to heal the heart.

By forensic, we claim that the sinner is accepted in Heaven's Court when he stands on the righteousness of Christ as his hope of salvation -- His doing and dying -- plus nothing.

By forensic we mean that God forgives man's sins and credits the righteousness of Christ to the believer's account without a catharsis or removal of man's sinful nature. God changes a man's standing in Heaven's court to that of "righteous" without purging or purifying the source of his corruption.

Forgiveness is the cancellation of a debt, but in God's Court of perfect justice, there is no forgiveness without discharge of debt. "Our forgiveness cost Christ his life, body, and blood" - Luther.

Because blood is the currency of the spirit world, Christ shed his blood to discharge our debt. But, it is not enough to be "forgiven." We must have righteousness to be approved by the Court. Because Christ obeyed the law as our Representative, He credits our account with works in conformity to law.

Forgiveness makes us debt free; justification makes us rich. Regeneration makes us powerful.

By forensic, we mean the righteousness God requires us to be accepted in His sight is extra no's -- outside of us -- the imputation of His righteousness to our account.

By forensic, we mean "righteousness by faith" -- the work of Christ done for us, outside of us, and **not** "in us" by the Holy Spirit.

By forensic we mean the believer stakes his precious all -- his eternal existence on the infinite, admirable, awesome works of the Savior -- and his shed blood poured out on our behalf as the price of redemption.

By forensic, we mean the first and greatest duty of the Christian is "reckon himself "dead indeed unto sin and alive to God" (Romans 6:11), a change in his position without a change in his condition.

By forensic, we mean *Sola Scripture* -- that men are saved by believing in the gospel record and not man's extra testamentary experiences.

By forensic, we mean ***Sola Deo gloria*** -- that the praise for our salvation belongs to God and to no other.

By forensic, we mean ***Sola Christo*** -- that the righteousness required to make a man acceptable before God is none other than the faithfulness of Christ.

By forensic, we mean ***Sola fide*** -- that salvation has been given to us when we place our faith in the doing and dying of Christ and **not** our doing and trying to be righteous that takes place after God gives men His Spirit.

By ***Sola Fide*** we refer to faith in the righteousness of Christ which is given to us as a gift of grace -- ***Sola Gratia***. Naked before the Throne and having no righteousness of our own, acceptance of His obedience to the law of God on our behalf, we find a right standing before God (Romans 3:21-22).

By forensic, we mean Sola Gratia -- that salvation is a gift of God and **not** a human merit -- something given, **not** something earned.

By forensic we mean it is anathema to place the hope of salvation in the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of man.

If we fail to preserve the distinction between justification by Christ's substitutionary work for us and sanctification by the Spirit's work with in us, then we confuse the gospel, fall into the error of Rome, and offer beets, beans, and broccoli to God from the garden of Cain as the basis of man's acceptance before the Throne.

Religious men who rely upon the alleged work of the Holy Spirit within the heart as the basis of acceptance toward a holy God inadvertently make an antichrist out of the Holy Spirit.

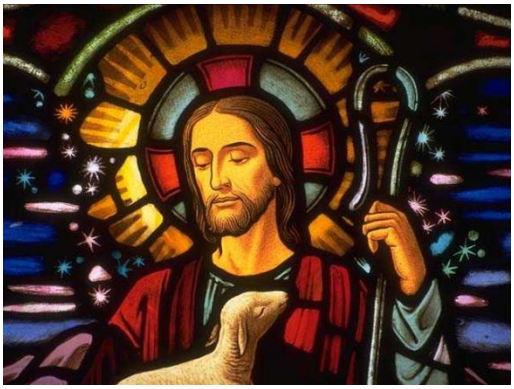
Forensic righteousness does **not** deny the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. It simply refuses to base justification upon changes within the heart of man due to renewal.

For, the true work of the Holy Spirit promotes the doctrines of sola Christo, sola fide, sola gratia, sola gloria, and sola Scripture.

18. The Qualified Christ

1 Peter 3:18

"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit," - 1 Peter 3:18



We are all familiar with the need to be qualified.

A borrower has to qualify for a loan. A student qualifies for college by passing entrance exams. An athlete has to qualify to be a member of an Olympic team.

Likewise, the qualification to be a Savior is righteousness. In law, we call it the doctrine of "clean hands." Only a litigant with clean hands can make a claim for reparations in a court of law.

The perfect, sinless life of Christ qualified Him to offer Himself up as the sin bearer of mankind – "the righteous" for the "unrighteous."

To be righteous one must have a perfect record of obedience to God's law (Romans 2:5-12). Because our Lord obeyed the law perfectly, God pronounced Him just / righteous.

But, what about us? Where can a sinner get perfect righteousness so He can be just before God?

The answer lies in the perfect obedience of Christ who not only died for us, but lived for us.

He obeyed the law perfectly for us so we can access the true source of righteousness.

Consequently, men of faith are saved by the "doing and dying" of Christ; that is, by "the righteousness of Christ" and His obedience to law which is given to us as a gift when we believe.

> *Romans 5:19 "For as by one man's disobedience (Adam's) many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one (Christ) shall many be made righteous."*

We obtain the righteousness we need to be declared just because of the perfect obedience of Christ to the law of God.

This obedience was not just a perfection of "being" but a perfection of "doing" It was not merely possessed, but expressed — a righteous performed by Him — a righteousness conformed to law.

This righteousness was not learned, it was earned!

It was earned because Christ entered the contest and endured the stress.

This righteousness is not only given to us, it had TO BE ESTABLISHED for us; that is, it had to be achieved through conflict and conquest; through testing and triumph; through patience and perseverance; through attitude and fortitude; through fighting and surviving, through ministering to the weak and finishing the course though weak.

This righteousness involved perfect obedience unto death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2:9-11).

The road to perfection was an intense struggle with the hostility and volatility of men, with demons and devils, with the powers of hades and hell, with lies and liars.

He met hate with love, pride with humility, compromise with certitude, and weakness with strength.

We must remember that his perfection through suffering that cost Him everything was for us that we "might be made the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Because He was qualified to be the Savior by His obedience unto death, we are qualified to enter life by His righteousness which is in conformity to law.

Thus, men are saved by works — His works! Not ours!

Believes thou this? (John 11:25-26)

What a Savior! Sola Christo, sola gloria!

19. Justification v. Pentecostalism

Cross centered or heart centered?

Romans 5:1

The central premise of the Pentecostal Movement is that the baptism or filling of the Spirit is an experiential second blessing which follows conversion – a system of wretched subjectivism: speaking in jibber-jabber, being slain in the spirit, hypnosis, holy laughter, waving of hands, and other subjective experiences.

But, what saith Scripture?

Romans 5:1 "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:"

Justification is the ultimate blessings of the gospel. It is an objective judicial decision within Heaven's Court *declaring a man righteous and treating him as such* when he believes the gospel.

The gospel is **not** something that happens in us, to us, or by us. It is an act of God that qualifies a man to receive His Spirit.

The baptism of the Spirit is an **objective act** outside the experience of the believer wherein the Spirit baptizes a man into the history of Christ (Romans 6:1-6).

The word "***baptism***" seemly means "***to place into***." It is an objective, unseen act of the Third Person of the Trinity. The idea is that the Spirit identifies the man with Christ in such a way he able to participate in the benefits of his historical accomplishments including, but not limited to, the Spirit's residence within the believer. Thus, the Baptism of the Spirit is likewise an act of God.

Pentecostals, however, **presume** the "baptism of the spirit" is a subjective, experience within the life of the believer additional to conversion that is determined by the believer's willingness "to let go" or "to absolutely surrender to the Spirit," or "to be totally emptied of self."

First, this post-conversion baptism of the Spirit implies that God's act of justification is **not** sufficient to produce an infilling of the Spirit in the life of a new convert.

If God's gift of righteousness is **not** sufficient to qualify the new believer for the baptism of the Spirit, what else is?

When Paul met certain people at Ephesus who claimed to be followers of Apollos, he asked, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed" and were justified? (Acts 19:2)

If Paul asked us, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed" and were justified? And, we said "No", Paul would reply, "Then you are **not** saved (justified)." He would not give us instructions on the "higher life." He would take us back to the fundamentals of the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

Second, the Pentecostal teaching implies that the Pentecostal ecstatic experience of being "baptized" is something greater than justification.

Luther believed justification was the chief jewel of gospel blessings, but Pentecostals feel that their ecstatic "second blessing" is greater than conversion, greater than justification, and greater than being declared righteous in the sight of God. How can this standing be superseded by a sensual experience?

Like the ocean that surrounds a little shell is greater than the water in the shell, the grace above us is always greater than the grace in us.

The Spirit is the earnest given as assurance of full blessings to come. But, in listening to Pentecostals, you get the idea that the down payment is greater than the kingdom blessings to come.

Third, Pentecostalism presents an unfortunate dichotomy between receiving Christ and receiving the Holy Spirit.

These preachers leave us with the impression the Holy Spirit gives greater and more substantial blessings than the risen Christ; that Christ gives us stones while the Spirit gives us diamonds.

Since all the wisdom and power of God is given to Christ, to possess Christ is to possess the full inheritance of the Godhead. Thus, the gospel of salvation in Christ is the full gospel. Everything else preachers offer besides Christ is pixie dust from Never, Never Land.

Fourth, Pentecostals divide the body of Christ.

In the mind of Pentecostals, there are "carnal Christians" (non-Charismatics) and "spirit-filled Christians" (Pentecostals and Charismatics).

But, there are **not** two classes of citizens in the kingdom of God. There is only one class of citizens on this ship, those who believe in "one Lord, one faith, and one baptism" (Ephesians 4:5). Moreover, carnality has to do with one's thinking, **not** one's nature. Those "in the flesh" are non-Christians; those "in the Spirit" refer to Christians. ***All Christians are in the Spirit though many think carnally. See the two classes of humanity in Romans 8:1-16***.

The Bible teaches that Christian baptism is the baptism of the Father, the baptism of the Son, and the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

In proposing another baptism, the Pentecostals not only preach a false gospel, but divide the body of Christ into the "Haves" and the "Have nots."

Such a false teaching is "another gospel" that nullifies the doctrine of justification and not the one preached by the apostles. This serious perversion of the gospel demands we shout "anathema" (Galatians 1:5-6). It is a false gospel.

20. Justification by Faith and the Charismatic Movement

When Napoleon launched his conquest of Europe, William Pit told the British Parliament, "*Roll up the map of Europe. It will not be wanted for ten years*."

Like a prairie fire, the Charismatic Movement is on an unprecedented rampage in the United States. Blurring distinctions between what is Catholic and what is Protestant, they set fire to churches, and then butter the survivors in the false hope of wretched subjectivism.

The Charismatic Movement which embraces "holy roller Pentecostalism," neo-Pentecostalism, and revivalism, is sweeping the world in a delusive frenzy of anti-gospel religious sentiment.

People searching for a "deeper religious experience" are attracted to the delusionary optimism of this apostate dynamism.

Subjectivism and the Gospel

The original sin of *libido dominandi* sucked man into the vortex of subjectivism.

Note how many times the pronoun "I" was used by Adam in one sentence:

Genesis 3:10 And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.

What a contrast between God and man! God came to the garden to seek man only to find a man preoccupied with himself and his fears. Captured in a metaphysical trap of self-centeredness, Adam could not escape the fetters that bound him to his egotism.

God's Cure for Subjectivism

Naked and afraid, God slew two animals to clothe the first couple -- a marvelous remedy typifying ultimate deliverance through the vicarious sacrifice of Christ.

Consider Paul's remedy for Corinthian subjectivism

1 Corinthians 15:1-4 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

This verse is stated so simply, we tend to overlook its context. This truth of the gospel which takes our eyes of off self was delivered to Corinthians groveling in a cesspool of wretched subjectivism: bickering, rivalries, carnality, indulgent in incestual acts, permissiveness, divorce, arrogant possession of knowledge, stinginess, idolaters concerned only about eating and drinking, oblivious to the headship of Christ and his law-order for the home, unable to love, grasping after spiritual gifts, competing for prominence in the church, praying in foreign languages in order to impress others, arguing about meat and vegetables, and chained to the iron-fetters of self-interest.

In order to correct the Corinthians who were overly concerned about spiritual gifts and their religious experiences which they held as proof of a higher spiritual life, Paul left them with his crowning argument -- ***the wonder and splendor of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ*** (1 Corinthians 15).

The Christian religion is unique in that it is a historical religion that proclaims salvation through the work of Another.

It is **not** centered on the worshiper's own religious, ecstatic experiences. When Peter was filled with the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), he did **not** stand up and talk about his new power, inner peace, his gifts or flurry of feelings. He spoke about the Christ and his death, burial, resurrection, and session at the right hand of the Father (Acts 2).

Life experience has shown us that the human tendency is to forget the objective gospel and to drift back into wretched subjectivism; to neglect justification, and to emphasize sanctification; to ignore redemption, and to center on regeneration; to slight Christ's work on the cross for us, and to spotlight the Holy Spirit's work in us; to ignore Christ's experience outside of us, and to focus on our feelings inside of us; to turn from Luther and to return to Rome.

The Victory of Another

Consider the importance of federal headship. In Romans 5, Paul informs us we DO NOT BECOME sinners because of something we did or experienced. We became sinners because of something that happened outside of us near a tree in the experience of Adam,

Romans 5: 18-19 Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

Likewise, men do **not** become righteous by something within their own experience. They become righteous by trusting in the work of the Savior, in His experience on a tree, outside of them! Selah!

His victory is our victory. We share in the benefits of His accomplishments sola fide.

God does **not** redeem us by producing a change within us. He redeems us by imputing our sins to Christ and by imputing His righteousness to us. When we were dead in Adam, God gave us life in a New Adam. By virtue of His death, burial, and resurrection, our Savior ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of the father as OUR REPRESENTATIVE.

We can raise our hands in victory and say with Luther (1519):

> *"Therefore a man can with confidence boast in Christ and say: 'Mine are Christ's living, doing, and speaking, His suffering and dying; mine as much if I had lived, done, spoken, and suffered, and died as He did" (Luther's Works (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957, vol. XXXI, p. 297).*

We say this with confidence because *" . . . the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life*" (Romans 5:18).

The Work of the Holy Spirit

The Charismatic will no doubt ask, "What about the Holy Spirit?"

John 16:13-14 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

The Holy Spirit does **not** speak of Himself. A mature Christian does **not** say, "I am a spirit-filled believer. Let me tell you about my religious experiences . . . my feelings . . . my gifts . . . and how I was baptized by the Spirit which I felt down to the balls of my feet."

The most Spirit-filled man on the Day of Pentecost said,

"Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know" (Acts 2:22).

"He shall **not** speak of Himself." The great affirmation of the apostles was **not** their spiritual feelings, but God's act of redemption in Christ.

Objective Faith

The worst form of subjectivism is religious subjectivism because it takes a man in and in and in to self. Eastern religions whether Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism (psychology), or psychological humanism all take a person on inward journey into the abyss of self.

The ugly fruit of eastern subjectivism was planted in America through psychology. Any archaeological journey into people's historical experiences by psycho-therapists is a journey into the dark world of wretched subjectivism and any attempt to "discover their wounded inner child." The Spirit commands attentive Christians to vigorously avoid these kinds of philosophical, subjective, religious movements (Colossian 2:8).

The great call of the gospel is sola fide -- to believe and rest in the Victory of Another. Biblical faith is not about feelings, euphoria, ecstasy, spiritual gifts, or demonstrations of spiritual power. Men are saved when the eye of the soul is upon the faithfulness and awesome power of Another. Faith is objective for it glories in the doing and dying of Christ -- in His victory at Calvary outside of our own experience. Faith rests in the finished work of Christ at Calvary. There is no rest for the sensitive soul in the unfinished, incomplete work of the Spirit on the human heart.

But, this faith, though objective, is not dead. It is alive and active. As Paul said to the Galatians, faith works by love (5:6). But, this love is also objective because love "*seeketh not her own*" (1 Corinthians 13:5). *Self is* NOT *the center of concern for a Spirit-filled believer.* The Spirit-filled Christian is **not** self-centered, but self-sacrificing and God-seeking.

Isaiah 58: 6-7 "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?"

God's love is **not** an emotion. It is goodness in action.

The Charismatic movements confounds *eros* with *agape* where adherents become infatuated with sensual and exciting experiences which is called "*love*" but in no

way is associated with ***love***. Love produced by the Spirit leads to a death of self - a love that transcends one's own personal feelings (Colossians 3:1ff).

By way of illustration, see the beautiful art work of Italian Baroque sculptor Gian Lorenzo Bernini in his masterpiece, St. Teresa of Avila -- a physical representation of the Roman Catholic Theology which emphasizes the heart as being the locus of salvation.

The Spirit-filled believer does **not** listen to uncertain voices from within or seek signs from without!

He does **not** confound inner impulses with that of the sure Word of God. He obeys Scripture seeking to conform his inner life to the absolute, objective standard of right and wrong, God's Word (law).

Karl Barth of Swiss descent said it well. When asked what was the most important theological principle he had learned in his life time, Barth replied,

> ***"Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so."***

The great message of the gospel is that God "so loved the world that he sent His Son" to "save his people from their sins." The sinner can find a way out of wretched subjectivism by focusing on the victory of Another outside his own experience. Upon believing the Savior and being justified, our Lord gives His Spirit to men to deliver them from the poison of subjectivism.

21. Justification by Faith and the Holy Spirit

Freepik

That early Christianity proclaimed the hope and realization of the Spirit as a tour de force at work in believers cannot be denied.

In the 16 century, the Reformers broke from the subjectivism of the age proclaiming sola fide, sola Christa, sola gratia, sola gloria, and sola Scripture.

At the heart of the debate was the nature of justification and the role of Holy Spirit.

The Reformers did **not** deny the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, but they rejected the idea that justification was based on renewal that took place in the heart of man by the Holy Spirit. They interpreted Titus 3:5 and "the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit " as referring to sanctification, **not** justification; as

being "saved" from the power of sin, and **not** being "saved" from the penalty of sin.

Titus 3:4-6 "But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior;"

Justification gives a man a right standing with due to the work of Christ on the cross; and, it is the Holy Spirit that testifies to the accomplishment of Christ and enables a man to see the One who became sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him -- a hina clause indicating purpose not effect.

The Reformers did **not** confuse the regenerating work of the Spirit with justification. To the Reformers justification was a judicial act of declaring a man right with God based on his faith in Christ and **not** a creative work of making a man righteous.

Two thing were at stake: (1) the glory of God, and (2) the remedy for a troubled conscience.

During the Counter-Reformation, Roman Catholic scholars doubled down on the Roman doctrine that the regenerative work of the Spirit was necessary for justification. To the Roman Catholic mind, being right with God meant a break from sin, faith working through love to cleanse the heart and purify the man. The problem, of course, was that the serious Roman Catholic plunged into wretched subjectivism -- an inner preoccupation with his spiritual achievements or lack thereof. Crawling up a mountain on one's bleeding knees became a means of pleasing God and achieving righteousness.

The question became, of course, "how pure do you have to be to be right with God?"

People who followed Roman Catholicism bogged down in fasting, flagellations, denying the body the eating of meats, duties to prayer, purgations and the like in order to achieve purity worthy of being declared righteous by God. The problem was that men could not eradicate the sinful nature. Therefore, adherents to the Roman Catholic position became victims of a screaming conscience. No one seemed to have enough of the Holy Spirit, and no one seemed able to separate themselves from their sinful nature.

"God, harden me against myself, the coward with pathetic voice who craves for ease, and rest, and joy. Myself, arch traitor to myself, my hollowest friend, my deadliest foe, my clog whatever road I go." (Amy Carmichael)

Due to the rise of the Charismatic Movement (a prodigy of Roman Catholicism) and a weakening of the Baptist Faith and Message, we must revisit the Reformation and the Doctrine of Justification.

Pentecostal David K. Bernard, in his book, The Role of the Holy Spirit in Justification, binds Charismatics to Roman Catholicism and the Doctrines of the Counter-Reformation:

> *"The contrast in Romans is not between mental acceptance of teaching and faithful obedience to teaching. Rather, it is between the works of sinful humans to earn salvation and the work of God's Spirit in human hearts, in response to their faith, to effect their salvation. Only the latter is sufficient to bring salvation. From this perspective, justification is not primarily a legal transaction based on acceptance of propositional truth, but it is a work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of those who yield to God's grace."*

Clearly, Bernard aligns himself with the Roman Catholic Church teaching that justification is based upon the work of the Holy Spirit and not upon sola fide.

Such an error is not easy to untangle because it is delivered to us by preachers in holy garb accompanied by the ringing of bells and the singing of angels.

Unwittingly, Bernard returns us to Rome while turning the Holy Spirit into some kind of antichrist. Thus, his book is heresy, plain and simple.

> *James Buchanan in his work, The Doctrine of Justification (1876), said the following;*
>
> *"There is, perhaps, no more subtle or plausible error, on the subject of Justification, that that which makes it to rest on the indwelling presence and the gracious work, of the Holy Spirit in the heart . . Nothing can be more unscriptural in itself, or more pernicious to the souls of men, than the substitution of the gracious work of the Spirit in us for us, as the ground of our pardon and acceptance with God . . . "*

What is at stake? "Everything" said Martin Luther: the purity of the gospel, the remedy for sin, correct theology -- theology which is alive, positive, active, and powerful. Whatever is not in harmony with the doctrine of justification in practice or in spirit is NOT Christianity. If wrong here, it must be wrong everywhere.

> *Romans 4:5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.*

The beauty of the Reformed doctrine of justification by faith is that it places man's hope of being right with God not in his own, imperfect spiritual experiences but in the perfect work of Christ outside of us on the cross.

InterVarsity Fellowship got it correct:

> *"As the disobedience of our first parents resulted in our sharing their sinfulness, so did the obedience of Jesus Christ through his death on the*

cross result in our justification before God. But, it must be emphasized, his atoning death is only made effective in our lives when we trust in him alone as our Savior (John 14:6). When we believe that Christ's death on the cross was our death to sin, God no longer considers us guilty and deserving of punishment (Romans 3:21-26); instead, he embraces us as his children and as full-fledged citizens of his heavenly kingdom (Philippians 3:20). " ("The Remedy for Sin," July 27, 2017).

God justifies men, not based on their cooperation with the spirit in the process of sanctification, but based on the perfect obedience of Christ which is credited (not infused) to their account when they believe.

James Buchanan correctly observes,

" . . . for if we are justified solely on account of what Christ did and suffered for us, while He was yet on the earth, we may rest, with entire confidence on a work which has been already 'finished'- on a righteousness which has been already wrought out, and already accepted of God on behalf of all who believe in His name . . . whereas, if we are justified on the ground of the work of the Holy Spirit in us we are called to rest on a work, which, so far from being finished and accepted, is not even begun in the case of any unrenewed sinner; and which when it is begun in the case of a believer, in incipient only, -- often interrupted in its progress by declension and backsliding, marred and defiled by remaining sin, -- obscured and enveloped in doubt by clouds and thick darkness, -- and never perfected in this life, even according to the low stand of a relaxed law, if that law is supposed to require any definite amount of personal holiness and life" (The Doctrine of Justification (1876).

Each member of the godhead has a specific role in our salvation: The Father loved us . . . and sent His Son to be wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. The Spirit is revealed as "proceeding from the Father," and sent by the Son to testify of Christ and to glorify Him. Buchanan adds,

"The work of the Holy Spirit is as necessary for Justification as the work of Christ, Himself; but it is not necessary for the same reasons nor is it effectual for the same ends," (The Doctrine of Justification (1876).

Can a sinner trust Christ as his Savior without first being touched by the Spirit? The Spirit leads the sinner to the cross, but the Holy Spirit did not die for our sins. He witnesses to the accomplishment of Another without demanding we confess the Spirit as our Savior. The Spirit is the Agent that unites us to Christ without Whom we cannot be saved. We must not confuse either the two persons or their two works. The Spirit leads us to Christ that we might be saved from

the penalty of sin (justification), and Christ gives us His Spirit that we might be saved from the dominion of sin (sanctification).

Justification is primarily a declaring righteous and not a making righteous. Righteousness is imputed to the believer, not infused into the believer. If being right with God depends on a man being made righteous, we must ask, "How righteous do we have to be to be right with God?"

The Reformers knew they could never achieve the righteousness God required even with the help of the Holy Spirit. They understood that mingling the work of the Spirit with the cross would evolve into the most sophisticated works program known to man.

The Reformers found peace when they understood that God declares men righteous when they believe. When men believe, God imputes the righteousness of Christ to their account at the moment of faith (Romans 4). Later, they discover the Spirit opened their eyes and gave them the ability to see.

Justification is completely outside of our experience. It is not something done by us, to us, or in us. It is a judicial act of God that gives a sinful man a right standing with Himself apart from the work of the Spirit: regeneration and sanctification.

While it is true that regeneration follows justification, justification is not dependent on the work of the Holy Spirit. Justification is singularly based on the vicarious suffering of the Savior on the cross on our behalf.

We are saved sola Christo, i.e., by the doing and dying of Christ, and not by mingling our works to live righteously with the perfect work of Christ.

DO NOT hear what is not being said. We are not saying the work of the Spirit is of little importance. We value the work of the Spirit who empowers us to break from the grip of sin. It is the work of the Holy Spirit that enables us to do good works, but those works contribute nothing to justification! The Spirit saves us from the power of sin, but not the presence of sin; from the control of sin, but not the condemnation of sin.

But, the Mediatorial works of Christ are clearly distinguished from the internal work of the Spirit.

> *"By the former, all the blessing of salvation were procured; by the latter, all these blessings are effectually applied." (James Buchanan)*

While we value the help of the Spirit to be holy in the process of sanctification, we cling to the fact that Christ was perfectly holy on our behalf as our Representative before the Throne.

Romans 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

Consequently, we insist on the Biblical fact that justification is a declaring righteous, and not a making righteous. We do not base justification upon regeneration or confuse justification with sanctification. Those who insist the work of the Holy Spirit is necessary for justification have a different gospel.

Sola fide! Sola Christo! Sola Gratia! Sola Gloria!

22. Justification by Works

James 2

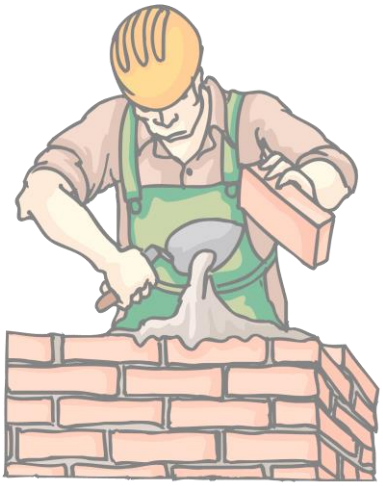


Figure 8: Art Explosions

The relationship of faith and works has been shrouded with difficulty partly because of the disparity between Paul's treatise on justification by faith in Romans, and James mention of justification by works in his epistle 2:14-26.

Doctrinal Positions

The Jewish faith contends that a Jew is saved by the quality of their works and that faith in Christ is not necessary for salvation. As a Christian, I reject this view because the New Testament *kerygma* (proclamation) advanced the necessity of faith in Christ as the basis of salvation (John 1:12, 3:16, 36; 14:6; Acts 4:12).

Roman Catholics, the Church of Christ, and many cults use this passage to support the view that faith plus works achieve salvation. To these people, human works by the power of the "indwelling Christ" is necessary to have a right standing with God.

Those of the Reformed faith believe that one is saved by sola fide (faith alone) and that this passage does not support the view that human works are essential for salvation; that this passage supports the doctrine of the "*perseverance of the saints,*" that is, true faith will produce works and where there are no works, there is no salvation.

Those in dispensational circles (DTS & Associates) agree with the reformed position except they do not like to say that works are the necessary and inevitable result of salvation.

Those in the Baptist faith generally agree with the Reformed position and take a strong stand that this passage is **not** teaching you are saved by works.

Martin Luther wrestled with James and questioned whether the book should even be allowed in the Sacred Canon.

Paul v. James

All Bible students agree that Paul taught "*justification by faith alone*" (Romans 3:21-25: 4:4-5; 5:1ff). Since James taught, "*You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone,"* the relationship between faith and works has not been embroiled in a dispute.

Q: Did James contradict Paul? Are the Catholics correct in saying that man is justified by faith and works? These kinds of question demand an accurate interpretation of the passage.

Background

In the Book of Romans, Paul lays out the tenets of the gospel doctrine (1:16). With the exception of Romans 6:11-14, there are no commands in the first eight chapters of Romans. James, on the other hand, is **not** a discourse on *gospel doctrine* but *gospel living*. James wants his readers to respond correctly to life's trials. Over 50 commands can be found in the short letter of James.

There is a difference between Paul and James. Paul was concerned about *correct believing* and that James was concerned about *correct living*. Paul advanced ***what*** to believe about the faith, and James advanced ***how*** to live out the faith.

James one is about Christian maturity (1:2-5) and how believers need to respond to the Word of God during times of testing. James 2 is about the detestable practice of favoritism; that is, showing preference to the rich above the poor.

You can understand the relationship of faith and works by noting **three types of faith**.

Dead Faith

14 What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him?

The word "***use***" (o;feloj) can be translated "profit" or "benefit." James is asking, "*What profit or practical benefit is a faith that does not help others who are in need?"*

The word "***save***" (sw/sai) is first used in James 1:22 and does not refer to Pauline salvation, that is, salvation from the penalty of sin (Romans 3:12-20),

but to being saved from an unproductive and unfruitful Christian life. Salvation in James is from the power of sin (1:13), from being lured and trapped by temptation (1:14), from the deception of sin (1:15), and from self-delusion (1:22).

If there was an error with Martin Luther, it was that he tended to always equate the word "salvation" with one's eternal standing before God.

15 If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do <u>not</u> give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? 17 Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.

James creates a possible human scenario where a true believer meets another who is hungry or naked. He wants his readers to question the veracity of a faith that "*speaks a blessing*" but does not "*act to give a blessing*."

The word "***use***" or "***profit***" is used at the end of verse 15. James is asking another question. He wants to know, "*What good, what benefit, what practical use is a faith that does not respond to true need?*"

By using the conjunction "***even so***" (ou[twj), James creates an analogy between the human body and faith. As the body dies when the spirit departs, so faith dies when works depart. Just as the spirit is the fundamental life principle of the body, works is the fundamental principle that gives faith "life."

In the absence of works, faith is dead. The word "***dead***" could be translated "*aborted*." Without works, faith is aborted, that is, faith is blocked from producing fruit. Apparently, James is talking about faith that was once alive, but over time began to shrivel and die because of a man's wrong response to trials. James is **<u>not</u>** saying a man can lose his salvation. Rather, he is concerned that a man will be tempted and give birth to sin (1:15-21).

18 But someone may well say, "You have faith, and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." 19 You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.

This is undoubtedly one of the most challenging passages in the Bible to interpret correctly.

Note the strong adversative in verse 18, "***But***." James now creates a *hypothetical situation* where *an opponent raises an objection* to what James is saying. He is called, "**the Objector**." All scholars agree that is it the Objector who speaks in verse 18 and not James.

BUT, not all are agreed on where the quotation ends! Since there are no quotation marks in the Greek, scholars differ as to where the Objector ends his objection and where James begins his answer.

Robertson reads:

> ***Objector****: "You have faith, and I have works"*
>
> *James: "Show me your faith without works and I will show you my faith by my works."*

The **NAS Bible** reads:

> **Objector***: "You have faith, and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works."*
>
> *James: "You believe that God is one . . ."*

J.P. Lange, J. J. Van Oosterzee, and **J. Dillow** (The Reign of the Servant Kings, p. 192) reads:

> **Objector***: "You have faith, and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works. 19 You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder."*
>
> *James: "But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? "*

Where one ends the quotation will determine how he interprets the text. Personally, I tend to agree with the longer quote of the three because it is obvious that James is addressing the **Objector** when he says, "*you foolish fellow*" (2:20).

The purpose of introducing the **Objector** is to contrast James' argument with the common mentality of the day—a way of thinking that made a bifurcation between faith and works. The **Objector** does not share James' view that there is a strong connection between one's faith and one's works at all.

The **Objector** says that he has good works and that James has faith**.** ***The*** **Objector** challenges James to show him his faith without deeds, but he knows that James feels this cannot be done. The **Objector** offers to show James his faith by his works, which the **Objector** believes cannot be done. He is saying, *that just as you, James, cannot show me your faith without works, I cannot show you my faith by my works*. The Objector claims that there is no necessary relationship between faith and works.

The Objector continues his argument by appealing to the fact that demons believe and have no works. **When** the text says, "***You believe there is one God, you do wel***l," it is **the Objector** speaking and **not** James. Believing in one God is a cardinal principle of true religion (from the Shema). The phrase, "*you do well*" (kalw/j poiei/j\), is also used in verse 8, (kalw/j poiei/j\).

When **the Objector** says, "***you do well***" (kalw/j poiei/j\), he is **not** saying, "Good for you!" Rather, the **Objector** is saying to James, "*Believing in one God counts as a good work."* The **Objector's** conclusion is that there is no connection between faith and good works; that there are different ways of expressing true religion, some through verbal expressions of faith, "*Be warmed and filled*," and others through acts of kindness that supply food and clothing to the needy. The **Objector** seems to be saying that because religion is not manifested in the same form, it does not mean that true faith does not exist in both.

The argument by **the Objector**, of course, is flawed and part of the delusion James discussed in chapter one (1:16, 22).

Dallying Faith

20 But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?

James argues with the Objector and calls him, "***a foolish man***," one who is "*emptied handed*" (Mark 12:3) and states that, "***faith without works is useless***." The word "useless" (avrgh,) is the same word translated "*idle*" in Matthew 20:3.

James is saying that faith that does not work is idle, lazy, sluggish, slothful, lethargic, and dallying. It is in danger of dying. A dying faith does not pray well (2:5) nor does it live well (1:26, 27). Dying faith succumbs to delusion and death (1:15, 16).

Dynamic Faith

21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? 22 You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; 23 and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," and he was called the friend of God. 24 You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone. 25 And in the same way was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works, when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? 26 For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

James believes that true faith produces works, not for salvation but as the fruit of a new creation (1:18), and that a faith that does not produce works is a "***dead faith.***" James proceeds with his argument and introduces us to the dynamic faith of Abraham and Rahab.

One of the key words in this section is the word "***perfected***" (evteleiw,qh). This is the same word that James was used in chapter one which can be translated "*mature*" (1:4, 17, 25). James is saying that "alive," dynamic, mature faith will produce the fruit of good works.

James' readers know that God justified Abraham in Genesis 15. God saw Abraham's faith and declared him righteous in His sight. But, it was not until Abraham offered up Isaac in Genesis 22, years later, that we see the maturity and fruit of Abraham's faith.

The same is true of Rahab. It was because she hid the spies, that Israel knew she was a woman of faith.

When James says, "*You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone,*" James is not talking about justification before God, but justification before men. Paul (on justification) takes us into God's Court Room (Romans 2:5-16), but James takes us into man's courtroom. Justification by faith vindicates us before God; Justification by works vindicates us before man.

Calvin put it this way: "*It is faith alone that justifies, but faith that justifies is never alone.*"

In conclusion, James is warning his readers of possessing mere intellectual faith that brings forth fruit unto death (1:15; 2:26) in contrast to possessing a mature faith that is fruitful unto life. He is challenging his readers to possess a faith that rejoices (1:2), prays (1:4-5), obeys God's Word (1:22), visits the orphan and widow, honors the poor (2:6), and meets the needs of the destitute (2:14-15). James is not saying that a man must produce works to be justified before God in heaven. James is saying *that there is a necessary connection between faith and works and that a faith that does not produce works is dead and dallying. But, a faith that produces fruit is alive and dynamic.*

Beware of the Error of Antinomian Christianity

Matthew 5:17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law . . .

Jesus exposed an error in the minds of people in that nominal Christians tend to divorce law from religion.

The Bible is more about politics than religion; more about nation building than church building.

Moses, the great lawgiver, was a statesman trained in the court of Pharaoh, and **not** a priest trained in the temple of God.

Moses was the legal legislator for the nation while Aaron was a priest for the people. Thus, the Torah was written by a lawyer statesman and not a clergyman.

He was to Israel what Thomas Jefferson was to America; and, what the Declaration of Independence is to Americans, the Law of Moses is to Western Civilization.

"The glory of the American Revolution is this: it connected in one indissoluble bond the principles of civil government with the principles of Christianity." John Quincy Adams July 4, 1821

Likewise, the foundation of the New Testament is built on the legal decrees of the King of Israel and not upon metaphysical spirituality of a touchy-feely eastern mystic.

"Deuteronomy was quoted by Jesus Christ more than any other book. Think a moment, if you do not know and understand Deuteronomy, then how can you understand Jesus when he quotes it?

About 71% of the Bible is about government. Deuteronomy and many other books of the Bible were written by heads of state (presidents, governors and kings) not by clergymen.

ALL of America's social, economic and health problems are cause by the violation of God's Law. ALL these problems are solvable by the application of God's given laws. Other solutions will not work. These laws from God for the good of society are recorded in Deuteronomy, explained by Moses, confirmed by Jesus Christ, taught by the Apostle Paul, rejected by today's churches and politicians"

[Bill Strittmatter, Introduction to the Bible Law Course, http://sheldonemrylibrary.famguardian.org/BibleStudyCourses/BibleLaw Course.htm]

The main message of Jesus was about the kingdom of God and the rule of God among men and not about fulfilling Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

By emphasizing an emotional gospel rather than love in conformity to law, the mutant, hyper-grace church has become an enemy of law, and therefore, an enemy of righteousness.

The mutant, hyper-grace church having retreated from public politics to private pietism has disarmed Christians making it impossible for them to wage war in the battle of ideas with humanistic lawyers.

By pitting law against grace, the mutant church has made itself an enemy of the kingdom of God.

In this legal vacuum, liberals have rushed in to build a nation on equity feminism and her whoring daughters: lesbianism, Sodomy, abortion, open borders, and more.

What happens when you spend a generation insisting that God's law is not part of God's gospel, and that God's gospel has nothing to do with politics—but then you still want to talk about righteousness and justice in society? You give up Moses in favor of Marx (Bnonn).

Because Christians have divorced themselves from law and married antinomianism, hyper-grace Christians are irrelevant in American politics as when an ex starts dating someone else.

Therefore, the nation is now governed by Muslims, faggots, abortionists, and sycophants to the Mystery Babylon and the new world order.

The solution, therefore, is not to discard grace, but to align it properly with the law. Just as all of America's social problems are related to rebellion against God's law-order, the cure is wrapped up in renewed commitment to the Lawgiver (Romans 8:4; 13:8; James 4:12).

23. Justification and Eternal Life

Romans 5:18 Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.

It is a man's justification by grace and by faith which grants him the right to life and to eternal life in a first fruits way.

The gift of eternal life is one the four major benefits preached by the apostles after the resurrection (Acts 11:18; 13:46; Romans 6:23).

Moreover, eternal life is the central theme of Jesus in John's Gospel; but in the Synoptics, it is the Kingdom of God (Ladd, 1974, p. 254ff).

Thus, "***eternal life***" is not only a benefit of believing the gospel, it is the central theme of the kingdom of God. That the kingdom of God arrived in history in and through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ meant men have access to eternal life.

Immortality

Q: The first question we must ask is this: *Does man's soul live forever?*

The Greeks believed that ideas, philosophies, and spirit were a part of an unseen spiritual reality. The Greeks believed that man had an immortal soul. When Socrates took his life, he did so believing that death was a friend; that death freed him from the prison of his own body; that his spirit would live on with the gods. A man can believe anything, but what is the evidence? What makes Socrates faith-statement more than wish and a dream?

From a Christian stand point, the Greeks were wrong. Death is not a friend. It is not beautiful—not even the death of Jesus was ugly. Death is an enemy that

stalks man every day of his life. It is a tragic and painful end to temporal life (1 Corinthians 15:51-53). God alone has immortality (1 Timothy 6:16). Only our Lord Jesus Christ has life within himself (John 1:2-3). But, in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, our "Savior Jesus Christ . . . hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:10). Jesus defeated death and because He lives, we have real, tangible, forensic hope that His promise of eternal life is more than a philosophy, more than an idea, more than a religious invention.

Linguistic Data

There are two words for life in the New Testament: *zoe* and *bios*. The word *bios* always refer to the principle of physical life. We get the term "*biology*" from this Greek root. The word for eternal life is *zoe*, and it occurs 36 times in John. The infinitive *zen* is used 16 times. The compound verb *zoopoiein* is used three times. The adjective *aionios*, says Ladd, doesn't carry a qualitative difference in kind from human life. *Zoe* is the life from God (Ladd, 1974).

Hebrew Background

The word *hayye olam*, "*the life of the age*" (Daniel 12:2) designates the future age after the resurrection. The meaning is not a reference to immortality after death, but complete well-being in earthly existence. This life was a gift of God full of blessing and gifts (Psalm 91:16). It included:

- Family blessing (Ecclesiastes 9:9)
- Prosperity (Deuteronomy 28:1ff)
- Security (Deuteronomy 8:1)
- Fellowship with God (Psalm 16:11).

During the Intertestament Period, Judaism concluded that death is not the end, that *sheol* was an intermediate state where the dead await resurrection. The view that there must be a quality of life in a future state emerged during this period says Ladd (1974, p. 255).

Life in Gnosticism

Life in Gnosticism was connected to God. But man, because of His ignorance and love of this earthly existence became mortal. By dispelling ignorance and by gaining gnosis, man could return to life and light. The Gnostics saw education as the key to freedom. By passing through various spheres of gnosis and by denying bodily desires man could find his true identity and true meaning in life. John's gospel builds upon the Gnostic belief, but credits light and life to Jesus Christ, the Logos of God.

Life in the Synoptics

Life in the gospels is connected with the Age to Come, the Kingdom of God (Mark 10:17; 10:23; 10:30). Eternal life is the life of the Kingdom, the dawning of the Age to Come. The idiom "*life*" is used in an eschatological sense in the gospels (Matthew 7:14; Mark 9:43, 45).

Life in the Book of John

Life still retains its eschatological character in the Gospel of John (John 4:14; 12:25), but it also has the potential to be experienced in present time (John 10:10). Rabbis saw that a study of the Torah would lead to life in the Age to Come, but Jesus connected life in the Age to Come with obedience to Himself (3:36). No law can create life or regenerate society, but association with Christ who is Life is the promise of eternal life.

The whole purpose of John's Gospel is not to show men the way to life in the Age to Come, "*but to bring them into a present experience of this future life*" now through a relationship with God's Son (Ladd, 1974, p. 257).

Christ came from heaven to give life to the world (6:33), to satisfy hunger (6:35). His very words are life (6:63). The Jews who considered the *Torah* as the means to life, **but** John's gospel informs us that life is connected to knowing *Christ*. In John, this life could be a present reality; i.e., a present possession now, in this age, in this life.

> *John 5:25 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead (unregenerate men) shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live (undergo a spiritual renewal).*

Notice the phrase "***and now is***." To John, eternal life had arrived in history. He connects eternal life with the Kingdom of God after his only references to the Kingdom of God in John 3:3-5. This life is part of the gnosis, and the gnosis is within reach of all men.

Eternal Life and Knowledge

To the Gnostics, possession of knowledge leads to life, to meaning, to things above. "*This knowledge is self-knowledge in the sense that man recognizes his true nature and his true place in the universe*" (Ladd, 1974, p. 261). To the Jews, knowledge connotes experience rather than contemplation (Isaiah 1:3). Knowledge (yada) involves relationship, fellowship, and intense interest in another being (Psalm 1:6). In John, knowledge is an experiential relationship, "*My sheep hear my voice and I know* (ginw,skw) *them . . .*" (John 10:27ff; 10:14-15).

To Jesus, men are ignorant of God, not because they are human, but because they reject Him!

To John, the life of the Age to Come arrived in history in the person and mission of Christ, and for those who dare to trust the *Logos*, He grants them true life, the knowledge of the Father and a relationship with Himself.

Two Meanings of Eternal Life

The Bible teaches that God's Kingdom would change the political order and displace all human rule and authority (Isaiah 2:1-4), and transform the physical order (Isaiah 11). The *Mystery of the Kingdom* is this: that the Kingdom which will one day change the entire external order of creation has entered history in advance of it's the Eschaton to bring the blessing of God's Kingdom to men and women without transforming the old order. The term eternal life has at least two meanings (Ladd, 1959, p. 66ff):

First, eternal life is a future event involving perfect fellowship with God.

In Matthew 25:46 the wicked are sentenced to eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life. The kingdom and life are equated, but eternal life belongs to the *Eschaton* and appears to be something that man cannot enjoy now (Matthew 19:16ff).

It is a future hope that is concerned with the whole man: *mind, soul,* and *body* (2 Corinthians 5:1ff; 15:50: Revelation 22:1-2). In this future life, God shall dwell among his people (22:3), and men "*shall see His face*." Here is perfect fellowship and perfect enjoyment of God's love.

This life is future. It is part of the Age to Come; part of the Eschaton. Yet, Jesus declared,

> *"I have come that you might have life and have it more abundantly."*

Somehow, the life of the future has come into this present evil age now and is available to mortal men as a gift of God. It is possible to possess this life now by hearing and believing the Son (John 5:24).

Q: What is this life? "*That men might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent*" (John17:3).

The Greek idea of knowledge is comprehension of facts, but the Hebrew idea of knowledge is personal relationship. Hebraic knowledge results in fellowship with the Father. The perfect fellowship reserved for the Age to Come can now be appropriated, not perfectly in its fullness and perfection, but it can have partial realization now! Eternal life means believers have been introduced to God; that God has become the God of Christians: that Christians have become His people; that all true believers have fellowship with Him (1 John 1:5-7).

Thus eternal life is the fulfillment of the following promises:

> *Jeremiah 31:31-33 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of*

> *Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

In this age we know in part, but then in the Eschaton, we shall fully know. Now we see in a "*mirror dimly*," but then in the Kingdom we shall see "*face to face*." Now we love imperfectly, but in the Age to Come we shall fully exercise the gift of love.

Second, the meaning of eternal life is the life of God's Spirit dwelling within us. The Life of the Age to Come is the work of the Spirit of God:

- The Spirit rests on the Administrator (Isaiah 11:2; 42:1).
- The Spirit will renew the earth (Isaiah 32:15).
- The Spirit will renew Israel (Isaiah 44:3; Ezekiel 11:19; 37:14).
- The Spirit will regenerate the heart (Ezekiel 36:26).
- The Spirit will generate vision (Joel 2:28)

In the Age to Come, the Spirit will regenerate the body (1 Corinthians 15:42-44). A "***spiritual***" body is **not** a body made of Spirit; rather, it is a body that derives its energy from the Spirit.

In this present evil age, the Spirit regenerates the soul of man. Believers have a partial possession of the Spirit now, "the earnest of the Spirit" (Ephesians 1:13, 14), a small down payment of the full benefit to come. Paul also says believers now have the "*first fruits*," a token of the full harvest to come, the complete redemption of their bodies (Romans 8:22ff). Today, in a *first fruits* way, the eschatological Spirit regenerates, washes, sanctifies, and renews believers (John 3:5; Titus 3:5), but the full harvest awaits the Eschaton.

Conclusion: This is eternal life: to know and enjoy God in this present evil age living the life of heaven in the company of others who also share a relationship with Christ; to experience the power of the Age to Come by the regenerating work of the Spirit of God; and to fellowship with others who have experienced this same transformation.

24. Nicodemus and Regeneration

Looking in or Looking out?

John 3:1-16

Nicodemus was intrigued by Christ (John 3:1-36), but he lacked knowledge and saving faith.

When Nicodemus came by night to our Lord, Jesus informed Nicodemus that a man must be born again before He can enter the Kingdom of God.

Jesus pressed eight truths upon Nicodemus: the futility of religion ("the ruler of the Jews"); and, the unity of revelation ("Do not marvel that..."); and, the necessity of regeneration ("You must be born again"); and, the agent of regeneration ("and the Spirit"); and, the mission of the Son ("to be lifted up"); and, the necessity of faith in Christ ("believeth in Him"); and the present condemnation of unbelieving men ("condemned already"); and, the release from condemnation of believing men; and, the possibility of experiencing eternal life, the first fruits of the Age to Come.

The word "***born again***" comes from the Greek word *gennao*, which means "to be born" or "to bring forth from the womb."

The phrase "*kingdom of God*" is critical to interpreting this passage correctly.

The kingdom of God is the rule and reign of God. It refers to the "Age to Come" with present activity in this age. The Age to Come is the rule of Christ, the age where He rules and life reigns, the age of regeneration. If men want to enter into the life of the Age to Come, they need partake of that life now!

Those who have Kingdom "*life*" have accepted the authority of Christ and His Law-word. When a man changes governments and a rearranges his affairs under the authority of Christ; i.e., he is born again. Those who have been born again have accepted Christ and yielded to His authority now, in this life.

Christ used the terms "*flesh*" and "*spirit*:" the flesh is "*all that man is apart from God*." The Spirit is the "*life of God*." To enter the Kingdom, a man must possess the life of the Spirit.

The new birth is a mystery

There is no command to go and be born of the Spirit.

The word "*spirit*" is the word "wind."

Jesus said to Nicodemus, "thou knowest not what is the way of the wind." This is Jesus style of saying that regeneration is not under the control of man. It is a work of the Spirit. New life is a gift of God. Man can do nothing to bring about the life of the Spirit. New life belongs to the Kingdom of God. It is a gift from the Eschaton sovereignly bestowed to those who desire to participate in the life

of the Age to Come. There is nothing a man can do to be born again. The new birth remains a mystery . . . but those that have it seem to hunger to know Christ in a deeper, more significant way. They love the Word of God and seem to hang around others who study the Bible.

Christ did not turn Nicodemus inward or entrap him in wretched subjectivism.

He turned him outward . . . to the cross . . . to Christ.

John 3:14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:

The new birth is compared to the time that Moses lifted up a brass serpent on a pole as the remedy for snake bite in the wilderness. The remedy for snake toxins in the blood stream was NOT to look at the snakes; NOT to look at the snake bite; NOT to take Grandma's ancient snake bite remedy; NOT to apply a tourniquet; or, to call the local snake bit doctor . . . But, to look away from the snakes, the puncture wounds, the pseudo remedies and to look at the serpent lifted up on the poll – a type of Jesus Christ on the cross becoming sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

> *"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." – 2 Corinthians 5:21*

Likewise, a man is **not** born again by looking at his belly button . . . or sinful heart . . . or "inner wounded child," but at Christ on the cross.

25. The Meaning of Regeneration

The Kingdom and Deliverance from Shame

The premise of this work is that the gospel delivers a man from the penalty and power of sin; i.e., from the magnet of his own wretched subjectivism.

You don't deliver men from the mesovortex of the eyewall of intense cyclone of subjectivism by meditation, introspection, brooding over one's wretchedness and pensive introversion. But, this is what the Counter-Reformation did. It empowered wretched subjectivism by grounding it in theological jargon.

Even the wonderful doctrine of regeneration has to be delivered from religious subjectivism.

Q: What does the word regeneration mean, and what is its relationship to the Kingdom of God?

Q: What does the phrase "born again" mean, and to what does it refer: the body, the soul, or the human spirit?

> *Matthew 19:28 And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*
>
> *Titus 3:5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.*

The Human Problem

Ezekiel 36:22 Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went.

Note: The word "profaned" (polluted) is used three times in these texts.

Ezekiel 36:23 And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, saith the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes.

Note: In order to be delivered from corruption and the vortex of wretched subjectivism God MUST BE sanctified and made holy in the eyes of men; that is, man must take his eyes off himself and off men, and behold the beauty of Another.

Ezekiel 36:31 Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations .

Ezekiel 36:32. . . be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel.

Shame is a human problem caused by Adam's sin and God's solution is regeneration.

Ezekiel identifies the human problem.

Note the words "***profaned***," "***loathed***," "***iniquities***," "***abominations***," and "***ashamed***" are terms of shame connected with wretched subjectivism.

One of the consequences of sinful acts is shame. Shame will appear in the human heart when a man of conscience sins. When shame is present, men hide

from God and from one another. Shame drives a man into isolation and dampens his relationship with others. The cure for shame is regeneration.

Moses identified the human problem

Exodus 32:25 And when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies:)

As a sinner, man commits shameful acts. Shame is that painful feeling by men who do something cowardice, lustful, ridiculous, or dishonorable. Shameful acts degrade character and rob men of internal tranquility. Men respond to shame in different ways. Some harden their heart so they can't hear the voice of shame, others plunge into self-pity and guilt, and others come clean and seek God's solution to shame. How many people have said to themselves, "I am what I am. I cannot change"?

The humanistic solution is that "*You must change by making better choices*" and "grow in self-esteem." But, this is easier said than done. In reality, people love their sin. They are slaves to sin. They may learn to mask their sin better, but they have difficulty changing what they are. Usually, people live two lives: a respectable public life (reform), and a private life full of hidden lusts.

The Remedy

Ezekiel not only identifies the problem, he provides the solution:

Ezekiel 36:25-27 Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

God's solution for shame is regeneration; i.e., a new heart created, energized, and sustained by the Holy Spirit.

While the term "regeneration" is not in the Ezekiel text, the concept of regeneration is supplied. Regeneration is His work: "I will cleanse you."

What was announced in the OT arrives in and is explained in the NT.

> *1 John 5:1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well.*
>
> *Romans 5:5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*

26. What Regeneration is Not

Figure 1 Ecstasy of St. Teresa
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We hear much about being "*born again*," but the term has been clouded with errant attachments: introspection, born again choices, meditation, spiritual journey of inspecting one's past, and being overwhelmed with a spiritual experience. Let's take a look at what regeneration is not.

It is **not** a command. There is nothing you can do to be born again. It is a work of the Spirit.

- It does **not** mean easy-believism.
- It does not involve a choice to be better and to do good.
- It does **not** mean to start being religious.
- It does **not** refer to water baptism.
- It does **not** refer to personal reform in an area of life.
- It is **not** a personal choice or decision made by an individual.
- It does **not** mean a new perspective on life. It is **not** snapping **nor** is it a crisis experience.
- It is **not** a change in the substance of human nature or rooting out of the sin nature (Manichaeans).
- It is **not** a twelve-step self-improvement program. It is not going to church to be inspired.

Theological Definitions of Regeneration

Hodge (1992): The subjective change wrought in the soul by the grace of God (p. 433) . . . a 'quickening,' a communication of a new principle of life (p. 435).

Westminster Confession (10.1-2): . . . he is pleased . . . enlightening their minds, spiritually and savingly, to understand the things of God; taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills . . . drawing them to Jesus Christ.

Thiessen (1992): From the divine side, the change of heart is called regeneration, the new birth; from the human side, it is called conversion. In regeneration, the soul is passive; in conversion, it is active. Regeneration may be defined as the communication of divine life to the soul (p. 279).

Berkhof (1993): Regeneration is not a change in the substance of human nature (Manichaeans) . . . a change in one or more of the faculties of the soul (Rationalists) . . . a perfect change of the whole nature of man (Anabaptists) . . . Regeneration consists in the implanting of the principle of new spiritual life in man, in a radical change of the governing disposition of the soul, which, under the influence of the Holy spirit, gives birth to a life that moves in a God ward direction (p. 468).

Mine: Regeneration is birthing the life of the kingdom of God into the inner man of the righteous (justified) in a first fruits way by the Spirit of God following his faith acceptance of the gospel. The regeneration of the body awaits the coming of Christ and the resurrection from the dead (Romans 8)

27. The Theology of Regeneration

Theological Issues Surrounding the Doctrine of Regeneration

Q: Does God regenerate then justify; or does God justify then regenerate? That is, does God change the heart and then declare one right with Himself, or does God declare one right with Himself then change the heart?

Q: Is change the basis of justification? If so, how changed does one have to become in order to be justified?

Q: Does regeneration include a pre-conversion work, or is regeneration narrower than this referring only to the impartation of life into the soul of man?

For a detailed analysis and explanation of the issues involved between justification and regeneration see the chapter on justification in this work.

Regeneration belongs to the Eschaton

Or to "the times of restitution" (Acts 3:21), and the "regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of his glory" (Matthew 19:28). Following the fall of man (Genesis 3), God promised in the *protoevangelium* (3:15) that He would reverse the devastating effects of the fall through the Seed of the woman, the Messiah.

From this day forward, the ancients looked forward to a "new heaven and a new earth" (Isaiah 65:17; 66:22; Revelation 21-22), to a time when the deserts will blossom with new life (Isaiah 32:15; 35:1-2), to a time when bodies will be regenerated and restored to perfect health (Isaiah 35:5-7), to a time when nature

will return to its Edenic balance and harmony (Isaiah 65:25). In the Eschaton men will know God (Isaiah 11; Jeremiah 33:33ff; Ezekiel 36:24-27), and peace will reign (Isaiah 2:1-5). This eschatological hope is called "the regeneration," "the restoration of all things," the Kingdom of God," or the "Age to Come."

The Agent of Regeneration is the Spirit of the Eschaton.

Q: Who is going to bring about this eschatological renewal: religious leaders, political leaders, powerful governments?

The Agent of this restoration is none other than the Spirit of the Eschaton:

> *"Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest (Isaiah 32:15). The very Spirit who created this heaven and earth (Genesis 1:2) will be the One who will create the "new heaven and new earth" (Revelation 21:1).*

Entrance into the Eschaton is by means of resurrection.

> *"And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world (this age: tou/ aivw/noj tou,tou) marry, and are given in marriage: But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world (age: tou/ aivw/noj), and the resurrection from the dead (th/j avnasta,sew th/j evk nekrw/n), neither marry, nor are given in marriage: Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection." - Luke 20:35ff*

"*This age*," *aeon* (aeon), is a period where death dominates man's existence. The Age to Come is marked by the dominance of eternal life. When John saw the river running down main street in the New Jerusalem (Revelation 22:2), it was a symbolic way of informing us of the reign of eternal life in the Age to Come. Death and all its accompaniments has been abolished because life reigns. Where Christ rules, death cannot reign.

The only way to enter that Age is by virtue of the resurrection. The Age to Come is the age of resurrection, the Age when the wicked will be purged from society and the "worthy" will receive a spiritual body (sw/ma pneumatiko,n, soma pneumatikon), i.e, a body made by the Spirit and fit for the Spirit (1 Corinthians 15:44).

This body will be "***imperishable***" (15:42), "***glorious***" (15:43), "***powerful***" (15:43), "spiri***t***ual" (15:43), "***Christ-like***" (15:48), and "***immortal***" (15:53).

Just as there are two resurrections, there are two stages to being "born again." Jesus taught a resurrection of the body and a resurrection of the soul.

The first resurrection is a spiritual resurrection:

> *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when*

the (spiritually) dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live" (John 5:25).

Q: Who are the dead? The dead in this passage refers to those who are dead spiritually; i.e., those who are separated from God (Ephesians 2:1). The word "***now***" (nu/n) is an adverb modifying the verb "***is***" (estivn). Those who hear and believe the gospel of the kingdom receive the spiritual life of the Kingdom now. Possession of this life is called a resurrection because the spiritually dead receive eternal life when they trust Christ. This is what John had in mind when he said, *"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection"* (Revelation 20:5).

The second resurrection is a bodily resurrection which will happen when the fullness of the Eschaton arrives in history:

John 5:28, 29 "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

To enter the Eschaton one must be regenerated by the Spirit of the Eschaton now. If one wants to partake of the second resurrection (bodily resurrection), he must partake of the first resurrection now (a spiritual resurrection). If one wants to enter Eschaton later, he must possess its life now.

If we want to enter the Kingdom of God, we must be born from above.

John 3:36 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

But, this is a work of God and not a human choice.

As every man has a human father, the child of God has a heavenly Father. As we are born physically into this world, we must be born spiritually into the world above. As the agent of physical birth is flesh, the Agent of spiritual birth is God's Spirit.

To enter the Kingdom of God (The Age of Regeneration) we must acknowledge the authority of Christ the King.

The Kingdom of God is the rule of God, and where God rules life reigns.

However, the Kingdom of God does not force itself on men. It attracts citizens by persuasion rather than by force.

If we want to enter the Kingdom of God, we must tender our resignation to self-rule and willingly accept Christ's jurisdiction over us as Lord of our life.

Just as we need to change citizenship if we move to another country, we change our spiritual citizenship by accepting the authority of God's duly appointed King.

We must come under new management by willingly surrendering the title deed of our life to the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 10:9). When we confess Christ as Lord, and place our faith in him, we will experience the first fruits of regeneration—the birth from above.

When we receive Christ, we will experience the powers of regeneration and become part of the family of God.

> *John 1:12-13 But as many as received him, to them gave he power (authority) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

Q: What does it mean to "receive him?"

To "receive him" does **not** mean to say a prayer. It does **not** mean "to ask Jesus into our heart." It does **not** mean "to walk down a church isle."

To receive Christ, is to receive Him for Who He claimed to be: *the Word made flesh* (John 1:1, 14), *God* (1:1), *Creator* (1:2), *Lamb of God* (1:29), *the Son of God* (1:34), *Messiah* (1:41), and *the King of Israel* (1:49). When we surrender to the King, we enter the Kingdom.

When we receive Christ for Who He is, we become part of the family of God.

The Spirit of the Eschaton regenerates all of God's children. All His sons belong to an eschatological family destined to inherit the Kingdom of God. This privilege is not earned by one's ancestral ties (blood), or by one's personal determination (will of the flesh), or by the wishes of a loved one (will of man), it is a gift of God.

God is in the business of regenerating souls. He placed a Serpent on a poll in the middle of history. Those who look to the Serpent for healing experience the regenerating powers of God's eschatological Spirit (John 3:14-16).

Did you notice the word "***power***" in John 1:12? The word "***power***" is not *dunamis* but exousia (evxousi,an), meaning "authority."

When we receive Christ, we gain a legal standing as a "son of God." This legal standing is called "*justification*" in Scripture. **First**, we are declared righteous before God (justified); **then** we are made righteous (regeneration). Only the sons of God have a legal right to inherit the Eschaton.

When we receive Christ, we receive the gifts of the Eschaton: *justification*, *regeneration*, *eternal* life, and the *Holy Spirit* (Ephesians 1:3-14).

Eschatological blessings belong to the Age to Come.

They are taken from the future and thrust into the present for us to enjoy now in a first fruits way in advance of the arrival of the Eschaton into history at the end of this age. When the Kingdom of God entered history in and through the ministry of Christ, He defeated man's enemies in order to bring men under the blessings of the Age to Come.

In Summary, unless we are born again, we will not enter the Kingdom of God. We cannot make ourselves born again. The term "born again" does **not** mean a "new lease on life." His life is His gift. It means to receive life from above, eternal life, the life of the Eschaton. The Eschaton is the Age to Come, the Age of Resurrection.

Regeneration is an eschatological event. When we receive Christ, the Spirit of the Eschaton, who will regenerate all things in the Age to Come, regenerates and cleanses us now (Titus 3:5). If we are born again, we have eternal life—the life belonging to the Age to Come. If we are born again now, we take part in the first resurrection, and when the Eschaton arrives, we will participate in the second resurrection, a bodily resurrection. To experience the second resurrection, life from the physically dead, we must experience the first resurrection, life among the spiritually dead.

Eternal Life is a Gift of the Eschaton

Just as we entered this life through physical birth, we must enter eternal life through a spiritual birth. Just as we had nothing to do with our physical birth, we have nothing to do with our spiritual birth.

The Agent of eternal life is the Spirit of the Eschaton. When we hear the gospel and God enables us to believe the Ruler of God's kingdom, we receive a legal standing as a son. All of God's sons receive the gifts of the Eschaton: *justification*, *eternal life*, *regeneration*, and *the Holy Spirit*.

When the Spirit enters our hearts we are cleansed from our sins. This cleansing is called "the washing of regeneration," an eschatological event in the human soul. Having been cleansed by the Spirit of the Eschaton, we become a genuine member of God's family, an eschatological family. This guarantees us a future inheritance in the Age to Come —the Age of Regeneration. This is our hope. This is our inheritance (Ephesians 1:13, 14).

28. Old Testament Pictures of Regeneration

Jesus chided Nicodemus for ignorance regarding the new birth: *"Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?"* (3:10). If Nicodemus had known the Tanakh better, he would have grasped the truth Jesus taught about the new birth.

The birth of Isaac through Sarah (Genesis 21): Like unbelievers are dead, Sarah's womb was dead. Just as the Spirit regenerated Sarah's womb and she bore her son, Isaac—a picture of righteousness, the Spirit regenerates souls. Just as there was tension between Ishmael and Isaac, there is tension between the flesh and the Spirit (Galatians 5:16ff).

The Bronze Serpent (Numbers 21): Snake bitten Israelites were dying. One look at the bronze serpent and gazers were healed no matter how bad the bite, no matter where they were bitten, and no matter how many times they were bitten.

Raising of the Widow's son (1 Kings 17): The boy was dead. Elijah stretched his body over the boy, prayed three times, and the boy came back to life. It is the authority and life of the once dead, buried, and risen Savior that enables the soul to live. When sinners believe, they are immediately identified with the death, burial, and resurrected Christ . . . and they come to life (Romans 6:2-11; Ephesians 2:1-7).

Raising of Shunammite's son (2 Kings 4:21): Type one: Just as her womb was given life by the Word of the Lord (4:16), we are born by the Word of God (1 Peter 1:23); Type two: like the "lad was dead" (4:32), the soul of the sinner is dead. Elisha sent his servant with his staff to raise the boy back to life, but the servant could not impart life. Only when Elijah laid himself across the boy, did life return to the Shunammite's son. Likewise, God did not send an angel to regenerate our souls. He sent His Son. The Savior in whom life dwells (John 5:26) came from heaven to die on the cross in time so that we might have life for all eternity (John 10:10). Because he was fully man, he could be man's perfect Representative. Because He fully identified with humanity, we are fully saved.

Healing the Poison Stew (2 Kings 5:38): Like a wild herb poisoned the pot of stew, the wild root of sin in our lives produces death (Romans 6:23). As the meal healed the poisoned stew, so Christ, the Bread of Life solves the problem of death in our pot (John 6:50).

Healing of the waters of Jericho (2 Kings 2): Like Elisha healed the bitter waters at Jericho by pouring in salt into the stream, sinners are saved from the penalty and power of sin by the salt-life of Christ (Romans 5:10).

Healing of Naaman (2 Kings 5): Like Naaman, the Syrian general, had leprosy, so the sinner has moral leprosy. Just as Naaman visited many doctors who

could not heal him, so the sinner tries many false spiritual-physicians before he comes to Christ. As Naaman was reluctant to obey the prophet, sinners are reluctant to obey Christ. Like Naaman was healed after he washed in Israel's Jordan River, sinners are healed when they seek cleansing from Christ, the True Israel of God. There is a river that cleanses souls and imparts life (John 3:5; 7:38; Titus 3:5; 1 John 1:7).

Return of the Israelites (Ezekiel 37): Ripped out of their homeland and exiled to Babylon, the nation of Israel was dead (586 B.C.). In Babylon without a land, without a temple, without a king, the exiles were a graveyard of dry bones. But, the Spirit of God moved upon the bones, upon Cyrus, and Cyrus gave the order for the remnant to return to Jerusalem to build a temple to God. In 536 B.C., the nation was reborn. Suddenly, the original people, with their original language, with their original land, were ordered to rebuild the Lord's House. Likewise, sinners are dead (Ephesians 2:1). But, when the Spirit plants life in the soul, sinners are reborn (John 3:3-7) and they become part of the temple of God (1 Corinthians 6:19).

29. Regeneration and the Kingdom of God

The Kingdom of God is "the age to come," an age where life reigns, where death is stifled, where creation will be regenerated (Isaiah 11, 35, 65, 66). Note what is affected by regeneration: desert, bodies, land, animals, Israel, hearts, etc.

Isaiah 32:15 Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.

Isaiah 35:1-2 The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the LORD, and the excellency of our God.

Isaiah 35:5-7 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes .

Isaiah 44:3 For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants .

Isaiah 65:25 The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD.

Ezekiel 18:31 Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, O house of Israel?

Ezekiel 36:24-25 For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

Ezekiel 36:26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

Ezekiel 36:27 And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

Ezekiel 37:1 The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. I will put my Spirit in you and you will live,

The Kingdom of God is an age of renewal, the reign of life on Planet Earth. It is an age where the all creation will awaken with life and the earth will once again flourish like a rain forest. Death will be annulled. Thorn and thistles will no longer dominate the land. The Bible calls this age "the Kingdom of God," "the Regeneration," "the Age to Come," and "Eternal life." It is an age of physical, moral, and spiritual regeneration (Luke 18:18ff).

To enter this age, one must be regenerated, be born again, have the life of the kingdom now to enter the age to come.

See Stockton, the "Gospel and the Kingdom: https://sedm.org/Forms/17-Theology/TheGospelOfTheKingdomOfGod.pdf

30. The Order of Salvation

(Ordu Salutis)

Art Explosions

In 1543, Copernicus discovered the astronomical principle that the earth was not the center of the universe, but that the earth revolved around the Sun – [a questionable theory today].

At the same time, a little monk in German discovered a "Copernican revolution in theology."

For a thousand years, the church saw man as the starting point of theology. While Copernicus turned the scientific world upside down, Luther turned the theological world right side up by plunging into the Book of Romans. Luther saw Christ as the Savior and man as the object of His love. He did not exalt the subjective, god-seeking man who focused on his own merits.

So, what is the order of salvation?

This is a highly controversial issue. Protestants are not agreed on this subject.

The issue is this: What comes first, the chicken or the egg; justification or regeneration?

Informed Catholics would say regeneration precedes justification; that men must change and become godly so Christ can save them.

R. C. Sproull says a cardinal point of Reformed theology is the maxim: "*Regeneration precedes faith*."

He argues for the *monergestic* work of God prior to salvation in contrast to a synergistic process wherein man cooperates with God in the regeneration process. To Sproul the "effectual calling" and "regeneration" are one in the same; i.e. his view of regeneration encompasses the whole process of salvation. This enlarged view of regeneration caused Sproul to believe in "Faith—rebirth—justification;" i.e., regeneration precedes justification.

Sproul is right in the sense that the Spirit acts on the unbeliever preparing him to receive the gospel; but, this view creates problems.

The problem is twofold: (A) a broad definition of regeneration which includes the entire calling process, and (B) making justification subordinate to regeneration (Sproul, 1994, Chapter, Free Will, p. 72).

Robert Brinsmead (Present Truth, November, 1974, p. 13) says the *ordo salutis* was the supreme heartthrob of the Reformation. He argues the gospel is not what man must do to be saved, but what God has done in Christ for man to be saved. In this, Sproul and Brimsmead agree.

In the October, 1975 edition, Brimsmead stated, "*But the Reformers, in the true evangelical sense, taught that justification bears the fruit of a regenerated life*" (p.

41). If this be the case, then Sproul's view is an anomaly but not untypical of reformed theologians.

The Reformers did not place the main emphasis on the need for righteousness within man, but placed the supreme emphasis *on extrinsic grace and God's work outside of man at the cross.*

Catholics placed supreme grace within man. Catholics utterly confounded two aspects of redemption--Christ's work of doing and dying and interceding for us, and Christ's work in us. Thus, Catholicism confounded gospel and law.

Based on a wide definition of regeneration, some reformed theologians like R. C. Sproul conclude regeneration precedes justification. But, this view is based on a narrow definition of regeneration.

Brimsmead concluded that justification and regeneration are closely connected, and happen rather simultaneously.

But logically, Brimsmead understood justification (declaring righteous) happens before regeneration (impartation of divine life and nature). Otherwise, *one could easily err by insisting on a change in heart (regeneration) as the basis of justification*.

I agree with Brimsmead.

This would make salvation dependent on grace in the heart rather than place the emphasis of the grace revealed at Calvary through Jesus our Representative.

For example, let's say a man has been charged with a crime and has a trial before a judge. He wants to embrace life, but he cannot enjoy freedom until his legal standing has been pronounced. If the judge says, "not guilty" his legal standing is secure, and the cleared can now begin to enjoy his new freedom; that is, once he is justified in court first, he can enjoy new life second. Justification precedes regeneration and the enjoyment of freedom from condemnation.

The Ordu Salutis

Divine provision: Christ came to represent His own. He obeyed the law perfectly for us, and died as our Representative sin bearer on the cross. He did all that was necessary to secure a place for us in eternity.

Divine election and foreknowledge (Romans 8:29;1 Peter 1:2).

Divine calling and drawing (Romans 8:30; John 6:37; 40). This calling would include the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit reconditioning man and making his heart receptive to the gospel (1 Peter 1:2). Some would say regeneration begins here because of their broad view of regeneration.

Hearing: Unregenerate men hear the preaching of the gospel.

Faith and repentance: enabled by the Holy Spirit to understand the gospel, repentant man believes the gospel and is saved.

When we emphasize what man must do to be "born again," instead of What God has done for man in Christ, ***we reverse the ordu saluti!*** The gospel is **not** that "You must believe," or "You must be saved," or "You must be born again," or that "You must surrender."

The Gospel is that God has provided a Savior and through His death, burial, and resurrection He has done all that is necessary for men to obtain peace with God.

The Theological Order of the Gospel

Justification: believing man is declared righteous in the sight of God and treated as such.

Regeneration: The Holy Spirit unites a man to Christ, changes his disposition, and imparts new life into his heart (John 3:3: Titus 3:5). Change begins to occur in the life of the believer, but this change is never the basis of his salvation. All the legal blessings of the Age to Come become the possession of the believer: redemption, reconciliation, adoption, sonship, and more.

Sanctification: The Holy Spirit begins to work in the heart of believer to make him like Christ. Believers become holy (like Christ) as they obey the Word of God and appropriate His promises (1 Peter 1:15, 16:2 Peter 1:3-8). (Note: there is a pre-salvic, sanctifying work of the Spirit whereby the Holy Spirit draws and prepares the sinner to receive the gospel message).

Glorification: This will be the day when the believer receives his new, glorified body and is conformed perfectly to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29; 1 John 3:1-2; Philippians 3:20-21).

The Gospel of Christ is the good news that God choses man, **not** that man chooses God; that God first works in the heart of man so he can believe the gospel; that God seeks man before man seeks God; that God justifies the ungodly, then regenerates the just. Believing man is "declared righteous," then he is "made righteous" as God's new creation.

Thus, the most offensive verse in the Bible to the Roman Catholic and Armenian mind is Romans 4:5:

> *To the one who does not work but trusts God* ***who justifies the ungodly****, their faith is credited as righteousness.*

31. Satan's Imitation of Regeneration

Satan's imitation of "being born again," or reversing the *ordo salutis* (order of salvation):

1. To substitute the work of God outside the believer at the cross for the work of God within the believer as the Gospel.

2. To shift the emphasis from Christ's experiences to the believer's experience.

3. To present the saved as the Savior; the object of love as the subject of love; man as God.

4. To present "new birth" preaching as a substitute for justification-centered preaching.

5. To substitute work within for work without. Looking inward to self, instead of outward to Christ.

6. To confuse sanctification as justification.

7. To substitute the believer's auto-crucifixion (death to self) for Christ's crucifixion.

8. To substitute the inspection of Christ's history for introspection of the believer's personal history.

9. To confuse the way of God as His effort to make sinful man happy, instead of the only way, his way of making Himself, a dissatisfied Judge happy with a rebellious sinner.

10. To stress that God is beholden to man instead of man being beholden to God.

11. To make change in the heart (regeneration, sanctification) instead of the change in position (justification) as the basis of salvation.

12. To stress blessing of *bios* (biological life) and instead of the blessings of *zoe* (eternal life).

13. To substitute visible righteousness (man's works) for invisible righteousness (Christ).

14. To substitute what man should do to "be born again" for what "Christ has done for man" to be justified. There is no command to be born again; that

is, there is nothing man can do to be regenerated except put himself under the instruction of God's Word.

Note the “What must I do” tracts circulated with the following titles.

- you must repent.
- you must believe.
- you must choose.
- you must surrender.

15. To substitute a gospel that begins and ends with man instead of preaching a gospel that begins and ends with Christ.

16. To substitute election (God choosing man) for freedom of choice (man choosing God). The Gospel is the good news of God choosing man, not man’s act of choosing God (John 6:44).

(Source: Stockton, "Five Pillars of the Gospel", unpublished seminary lecture notes for New Testament Theology; Present Truth/Verdict, vol. 3, No. 5, 1974).

32. Justification and Forgiveness

Biblical Words for Forgiveness

Forgiveness and justification are two sides to the same coin. While forgiveness and justification happen simultaneously, the two terms must be defined correctly and separated so the Biblical mind can appreciate both acts of God.

Forgiveness involves the cancellation of debt while justification involves crediting righteousness to the believer to create a right standing before God.

Nasa’ [*naw-saw’*] or *nacah*: The first usage is found in Genesis 50:17. In the Qal form it means to lift, lift up, to bear, carry, support, sustain, endure, to take, take away, to carry off, and to forgive.

> *Psalm 25:18 Look upon mine affliction and my pain; and forgive [nasa] all my sins.*
>
> *Exodus 10:17 Now therefore forgive [nasa], I pray thee, my sin only this once, and entreat the LORD your God, that he may take away from me*

this death only.

Salach [xl;s, *saw-lakh'*] means to forgive or to pardon; [Qal] to forgive, pardon; [Niph] to be forgiven. In Numbers 30:12, the Lord "released" [salach] a woman from a vow if her husband was not aware of it. *Salach* implies complete and total release from debt while not mitigating guilt [2 Chronicles 7:14].

Kaphar [kaw-far'] a primitive root expressing "to cover with pitch, purge, to make an atonement, to make reconciliation, to pacify, to propitiate; to cover over" [See Psalm 78:38-Kapar is in the Piel form.].

> *Jeremiah 18:23 Yet, LORD, thou knowest all their counsel against me to slay [me]: forgive [kaphar] not their iniquity, neither blot out their sin from thy sight, but let them be overthrown before thee; deal [thus] with them in the time of thine anger.*

Kaphar means to wipe out [Qal], to blot out, to obliterate, or to exterminate or "to cover." It is the same word used in God's instructions to Noah to cover the ark with pitch [Genesis 6:14]. God is such a forgiving God, that in Jeremiah 18:23, the prophet has to pray that YHWH might not forgive or "blot out" the sins of those seeking to murder him. Jonah, knowing that YHWH was such a forgiving, compassionate God, resigned his prophetic calling fearing that God might show mercy on his fierce enemies, the Ninevites. And, when God pardoned the Ninevites, righteous, vindictive Jonah plunged into the pit of despair. Like Niagara Falls, forgiveness flows from His throne of grace on the rocky shores of humanity.

Aphiemi [Greek]: This word is used more than any other to represent forgiveness. It is used as a noun fifteen times [15] times and as a verb forty [40] times. It literally means "to send away" [Romans 4:5-6]. We see this in the tradition at Yom Kippur regarding the sending away of the scapegoat—a picture of God putting away sin from His presence. When God forgives sin, he sends it away.

> *Isaiah 38:17 Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.*

This metaphor communicates our sins are put "out of sight."

> *Micah 7:19 He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.*

This metaphor suggests that sins are put out of sight and out of reach–a kind of "No Fishing" sign posted on the shore line.

> *Hebrews 10:17 And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.*

A second meaning of ***apheimi*** is "to cancel a debt." See Matthew 18:27 " . . and forgave [avfh/ken] him the debt."

Apoluo [Greek] means "to put away." It is formed by two words: "*apo*" meaning "from" and "*luo*" meaning "to loose." It is the same word used for "divorce" in Matthew 5:31. The idea behind this word is that God divorces our sin from our relationship with Him. In Colossians 1:13, 14, redemption [accusative] is identified as an act of forgiveness, the release from a debt.

Paresis [Greek] means "remission" [Romans 3:25]. In OT times, God "passed over" sins; that is, He did not punish all sins immediately. This "*passing over*" of sins left God open to the charge He was too tolerant of sin. Though for a time, God "passed over" sin, He did not ignore it!! At the cross, however, the debt became due. At Calvary, He put away sin in such a way as to no longer hold repentant men responsible for it. God did not ignore sin. He punished it. At the cross the debt was demanded . . . and THE PRICE WAS PAID!!

Charizomai [Greek] is the word for "*grace*." It infers unconditional favor or merit [Colossians 2:13]. *Charozomai* points to the nature of forgiveness: i.e., forgiveness is a gracious, kind gift from God. Forgiveness comes to those who are unworthy, but it does not come to those who are unrepentant.

33. Justification and Eternal Security

Figure 9: Freepik

Why should Christians believe in eternal security?

The nature of election [Ephesians 1:4]: Our faith, our conversion, and our sins did not take God by surprise. He appointed our election, our faith, and our temptations [Ephesians 1:4; 2:8, 9; 1 Peter 1:2]. His child's success will glorify Him as well as His child's failures.

Salvation is God's choice, and He makes no wrong choices.

Election is not based on God's knowledge. He knows because He elects.

Election is not based on man's response. God did not choose us because He knew we would choose Him. It is because He elected us, we chose Him.

The nature of propitiation: If there is doubt about how salvation is attained, there will be doubt about how salvation can be maintained (Stanley, 2002, p. 26).

Salvation is God's work, not men:

While salvation comes to the unworthy, it does not come to the unrepentant. While salvation comes to those who have saving faith, saving faith is not the basis of man's salvation. It is not faith that saves a man, but Christ's accomplishments at Calvary that saves a man. God was propitiated in Christ and He is totally satisfied with the transactions that took place at Calvary [Romans 3:24ff]. Salvation rests, not in the quality of one's faith, but the quality of His faithfulness.

The efficacy of Christ's work:

When Christ died, how many sins did He die for? When Christ died, all our sins were in the future. It is, therefore, reasonable to conclude that He paid for all our sins [past, present, and future to our time] by one righteous act at Calvary [Romans 5:16f]

The object of justification:

God justifies the wicked, not the righteous [Romans 4:5]. That is, he does not justify men because of improvement in their condition, He justifies men because of an improvement in their position. Justification is not experiential; it is a legal, forensic, position in the sight of the Court. Righteousness is first imputed [justification], and then it is implanted [regeneration]. Justification is not based on a change, or on experience in the life of the believer. It is founded on his confidence in the work of Christ on his behalf.

The nature of justification:

Justification is an official announcement of a court. In biblical terms, judgment is an eschatological event. The blessing of the Kingdom [justification] have been thrust into the present experience by the redemption of Christ to declare the ultimate verdict of "justified" to those who seek shelter from judgment under the covering of the cross. This is the ultimate Court, the ultimate verdict, and the final judgment:

Romans 8:33 Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.

The nature of regeneration:

Two important realities begin at the moment of trust. First, righteousness is imputed to the account of the new believer without a change in the believer's condition [Romans 4:5] and he is baptized or placed "into Christ" [Romans 6:3ff].

Though justification and regeneration happen simultaneously, they have a logical order.

First, the believer is "declared righteous," [justification], and second, the believer is "made righteous" [regeneration]; that is, the believer is "born of God." He becomes a child of God by the indwelling of the Spirit of God.

Regeneration begins a change in the believer's condition that is experiential and heart felt--a change so real that his nature is changed forever [Romans 6:2]. God's seed is permanently implanted in the heart of man. For this reason believers are called "children of God" [Ephesians 5:1-2], "saints" [1 Corinthians 1:2], a "new creation" [2 Corinthians 5:17], a "holy temple" [Ephesians 2:21-22] a "holy priesthood" [1 Peter 2:5], a "holy nation" [1 Peter 2:9], and "made righteous" [Romans 5:19].

Regeneration has a broad definition and a narrow definition in Christian circles. Some would say that regeneration comes first, then justification; others place justification first, then regeneration. This debate is called the *ordu salutis*, or order of salvation.

While there is a pre-salvic work that prepares the heart to receive Christ, the order of salvation is [a] justification, and [b] regeneration. Justification is not based upon a change in character, but upon faith in Christ, which produces a change in character.

If regeneration is the basis of justification, then it is conceivable to think that a person could be "unjustified," that is, if there is not sufficient "change," a person could be called back into Court for further adjudication. Justification is a pronouncement by the Court, not a conversion in Court. Regeneration is not the reason the Judge says a believer is justified! A man is not justified because he is born again; because he is justified, he is born again. He is not transformed and then justified, he is justified and then transformed (Romans 4:1-13; 5:1-11; 12:1-3).

Second, it is conceivable a person could be "unborn" if regeneration was legal and forensic, but it is inconceivable to be "unborn" if regeneration is a fact of spiritual existence. For example: a couple can discuss having children [the idea stage] and they can change their minds [idea stage], but once conception is achieved, mental gymnastics cannot undo the pregnancy.

The same is true of a believer. Salvation is first mental [a change of mind, a trust] and legal [A change in God's mind]; secondly, it is substantial and experiential because the Holy Spirit inseminates spiritual life into the heart of the believer. Regeneration is irreversible. Once born in the Spirit, one cannot be unborn.

The nature of the condition of salvation:

Salvation is based on two responses from man: repentance and faith. These are like two sides of a coin. You cannot have one without the other. Repentance is a "change of mind" about sin. Faith is a "change of mind" about Christ. The former rejects sin [Isaiah 53:6], and the latter embraces Christ. Repentance shuns "self-will," and faith yields "to His will."

Repentance must deal with Christ as Lord now at the right hand of God; faith must deal with Christ's history; that is, His death, burial, and resurrection [Romans 10:9; Romans 15:1-4]. Salvation has nothing to do with man's actions, and everything to do with God's actions in Christ. Though works is an evidence of salvation, salvation is not based on human works. If good works maintains salvation, what is the difference then from being saved by good works?

The nature of God:

God is light [1 John 1:5] and God is love [1 John 4:8]. His love was satisfied with His Son's life. His holiness was satisfied by His Son's death [Romans 3:27ff]. God loves His Son, but He did not spare Him to save you and me. It is unthinkable to believe that any of those who seek refuge in Him could ever be rejected. In God's eyes, all his children are justified and glorified—even the ornery ones [Romans 8:30].

God is able to keep His people [2 Timothy 1:12]. He is free to keep His people [Romans 3:28f; 8:1]. He has provided advocacy for His people [1 John 2:1; Hebrews 7:25: 4:16].He is involved in disciplining His children as a responsible Father [Hebrews 12]. He promises to keep His people [Hebrews 8:6-12; Luke 22:20; Romans 4:25; John 3:14]. He cannot lie [Titus 1:2].

The nature of grace:

Grace is "undeserved favor."

Mercy restrains judgment; grace bestows positive blessing to the recipient.

All men deserve hell; none deserve heaven. No one will be in heaven because they deserve to be there. People are in heaven because God chose them to be there with Him. This is grace. Salvation is obtained by grace. It is not attained by human effort. This is not cheap grace. There was nothing cheap about sacrificing the Son.

Admittedly, while God's grace comes on the unworthy, it does not come on the rebellious! He saves us, not because we are good, but because He is good.

The nature of a "gift": Salvation is a free gift, free to us; but it was not free to God. His gift cost Him everything! Gifts are different from rewards. Rewards are earned; gifts are bestowed: "*God so loved the world He gave His only begotten Son . . .*"

The argument of silence: No individual in Scripture is said to have lost his salvation. No one is said to "be unborn," to have lost eternal life, to have lost his standing, to have his justification withdrawn, to have his name removed from the Lamb's Book of Life, to be dismembered from the body of Christ, or to have lost his robe of righteousness. Furthermore, there is not a single statement that tells us how and when a person could lose his salvation.

In conclusion, eternal security is an assurance that flows out of understanding the cross. However, there is no assurance for a rebel or one who walks in the ways of sinful men. Eternal security comforts the weak with knowledge of self, but it is not a doctrine designed to assure the wicked man that he's going to heaven.

34. Reasons to believe in Eternal Security

An Argument for Assurance of Salvation

Security is necessary for Christian growth; otherwise, one seeks to become godly in order to merit salvation . . . or preserve it; that is, sanctification becomes a necessity in order to "be saved" or "to keep saved." Justification is necessary for salvation; sanctification is necessary to be a complete Christian. Justification saves; sanctification beautifies.

Q: Why should Christians believe in eternal security?

1. **The nature of election (Ephesians 1:4**): Our faith, our conversion, and our sins did not take God by surprise. He appointed our election, our faith, and our temptations [Ephesians 1:4; 2:8, 9; 1 Peter 1:2]. His child's success will glorify Him as well as His child's failures.

Salvation is God's choice, and He makes no wrong choices.

Election is not based on God's knowledge. He knows because He elects.

Election is not based on man's response. God did not choose us because He knew we would choose Him. It is because He elected us, we chose Him.

2. **The nature of propitiation**:

> *If there is doubt about how salvation is attained, there will be doubt about how salvation can be maintained (Stanley, 2002, p. 26).*

Salvation is God's work and not man's work.

While salvation comes to the unworthy, it does not come to the unrepentant. While salvation comes to those who have saving faith, saving faith is not the basis of man's salvation. It is not faith that saves a man, but Christ's accomplishments at Calvary that saves a man. God was propitiated in Christ and He is totally satisfied with the transactions that took place at Calvary [Romans 3:24ff]. Salvation rests, not in the quality of one's faith, but the quality of His faithfulness.

3. **The efficacy of Christ's work**. When Christ died, how many sins did He die for? When Christ died, all our sins were in the future. It is, therefore, reasonable to conclude that He paid for all our sins [past, present, and future to our time] by one righteous act at Calvary [Romans 5:16f]

4. **The object of justification**: God justifies the wicked, not the righteous [Romans 4:5]. That is, he does not justify men because of improvement in their condition; He justifies men because of an improvement in their position. Justification is not experiential; it is a legal, forensic, position in the sight of the Court. Righteousness is first imputed [justification], and then it is implanted [regeneration]. Justification is not based on a change, or on experience in the life of the believer. It is founded on his confidence in the work of Christ on his behalf.

5. **The nature of justification**: Justification is an official announcement of a court. In biblical terms, judgment is an eschatological event. The blessing of the Kingdom [justification] have been thrust into the present experience by the redemption of Christ to declare the ultimate verdict of "justified" to those who seek shelter from judgment under the covering of the cross. This is the ultimate Court, the ultimate verdict, and the final judgment:

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believers are called “children of God” [Ephesians 5:1-2], “saints” [1 Corinthians 1:2], a “new creation” [2 Corinthians 5:17], a “holy temple” [Ephesians 2:21-22] a “holy priesthood” [1 Peter 2:5], a “holy nation” [1 Peter 2:9], and “made righteous” [Romans 5:19].

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of salvation, salvation is not based on human works. If good works maintains salvation, what is the difference then from being saved by good works?

8. **The nature of God**: God is light [1 John 1:5] and God is love [1 John 4:8]. His love was satisfied with His Son's life. His holiness was satisfied by His Son's death [Romans 3:27ff]. God loves His Son, but He did not spare Him to save you and me. It is unthinkable to believe that any of those who seek refuge in Him could ever be rejected. In God's eyes, all his children are justified and glorified—even the ornery ones [Romans 8:30].

God is able to keep His people [2 Timothy 1:12]. He is free to keep His people [Romans 3:28f; 8:1]. He has provided advocacy for His people [1 John 2:1; Hebrews 7:25: 4:16].He is involved in disciplining His children as a responsible Father [Hebrews 12]. He promises to keep His people [Hebrews 8:6-12; Luke 22:20; Romans 4:25; John 3:14]. He cannot lie [Titus 1:2].

9. **The nature of grace**: Grace is "undeserved favor."

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10. **The argument of silence**: No individual in Scripture is said to have lost his salvation. No one is said to "be unborn," to have lost eternal life, to have lost his standing, to have his justification withdrawn, to have his name removed from the Lamb's Book of Life, to be dismembered from the body of Christ, or to have lost his robe of righteousness. Furthermore, there is not a single statement that tells us how and when a person could lose his salvation.

In conclusion, eternal security is an assurance that flows out of understanding the cross. However, there is no assurance for a rebel or one who walks in the ways of sinful men. Eternal security comforts the weak with knowledge of self, but it is not a doctrine designed to assure the wicked man that he's going to heaven.

35. Questions About God's Sovereignty

And Man's "free" will

Romans 9

Introduction

Our text deals with the subject of the sovereignty of God. Few doctrines are more despised by the natural man than the truth that God is sovereign and exercises vigorous and efficacious control over man.

Further, as R.C. Sproul points out, while Christians profess to believe in the sovereignty of God, they really believe in human choices and the sovereignty of man. "*It's their choice,*" they say. Therefore, it behooves us to look at this text and attempt to grasp its meaning and implications.

The background of this passage is germane to Paul's intense desire to see his own people come to salvation in Christ. Most of his brethren believed that their genetic relationship to Abraham was sufficient to make a claim on God and found no need to embrace Christ and His work at Calvary.

Paul explained that not all Israelites were true Israelites; that is, not all of Abraham's descendants "in the flesh" could be considered genuine children of Abraham in spirit.

Two examples were provided: Ishmael (9:9), and Esau (9:10-13). That is, Ishmael and Esau were both descendants of Abraham, but the Patriarchal blessings fell to Isaac not Ishmael, and then to Jacob and not Esau. The dreaded implication of this fact demonstrated that not all men claiming to have a genetic relationship to Abraham are going to enter the kingdom of God; that not all physical sons of Abraham are children of God; that is, one's heritage does not secure salvation.

Q: Is God fair and just?

Romans 9:14-18 What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! 15 For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."16 So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. 17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." 18 So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.

Having stated that not all physical descendants of Abraham are de jure children of God, and having provided two illustrations of election in Isaac and Jacob, Paul anticipates an objection and answers it with a question, "*Is there any injustice on God's part?"*

***Q:* Is God unjust in choosing some for salvation, but not others?**

His First Example: God was not unjust in sparing (granting a pardon to) some of the Israelites from judgment after they worshipped the golden calf.

He answers his own question with a verse from the golden calf (*eggel hazahav*) story in Exodus 32 wherein Aaron caved into the pressure of the rebels to make an idol for the nation. The golden calf was the result of Aaron's malleability to the will of the idolaters. Sound too familiar? So egregious was this transgression that Moses ground the abominable image into powder, threw it in the stream, and made the people drink it.

Next, Moses summoned volunteers to strap on their swords and to go through the camp to hack and stack the rebels. About 3,000 of the idolaters were executed. All were traitors. All were guilty. Three thousand were killed and the rest survived. The dead were objects of wrath; the living were objects of mercy.

So, was God unjust in sparing the rest of the congregation from the sword? Paul's answer is "No!"

The LORD, by right of creation and by right of redemption, exercised total authority over the refugees from Egypt. He was not unjust in condemning some rebels to death, nor was he unfair in sparing others. It's called "compassion," and "mercy."

From this first answer, Paul draws upon a spiritual truth from the pardon issued to the surviving Israelites: *Salvation does not depend on the will of man nor the effort of men*. *Salvation is grounded solely in the mercy of God*. He loves because of Who He is, a God of love.

Salvation is of God and not of man! All sinners deserve to die. None can save themselves from a judgment decreed. A pardon is available, but the pardon does not reside in the will of man or his effort to secure grace. It starts and ends with the will and mercy of the LORD God. "Jesus came to save His people from their sins!" He did not come to help them save themselves. Selah! (Matthew 1:21)

His Second Answer: God was not unjust in hardening the heart of Pharaoh. The text says, "I raised thee up" to this position of power and influence (Exodus 19:16). It does not say, "I created thee to condemn thee."

There are about 15 or more verses referring to the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. About half of them inform us God hardened Pharaoh's heart; the other

half instructs us that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. Paul asserts that as God was not unjust in hardening the heart of Pharaoh, He was not jaundiced in hardening some of the Israelites against the gospel of Christ. All Israelites are sinners. All deserve judgment. God is not unjust for enlightening some for salvation nor is He unjust for blinding others to that same knowledge -- to blind people who want to be blind to the gospel -- to live without the knowledge of God in darkness.

Pharaoh's hardening: The whole idea that God would harden any man's heart repulses the twisted logic of natural man. The text, however, informs us that God was the Prime Mover in the hardening—a thickening that resulted in the mighty display of power and deliverance of Israel from Egypt. The idea here is that God agitated Pharaoh and stirred him to reject Moses' petition to free the slaves so that God's glory might be put on full display to the whole world.

Much has been written on this subject. But, let it be noted *that Pharaoh consented to God's hardening his heart*; that is, *it was the choice he was most naturally inclined to make;* that God did not harden a good man's heart in search of truth, but He hardened Pharaoh -- *an evil man's heart in love with power*. God does **not** harden the hearts of good men . . . of weak men struggling with sin who want to know Him! If God hardens the heart of sinful men, *it is because they want it that way*; and, if God softens some hearts to hear and receive the gospel message, is God unjust? Paul's answer is "***No, may it never be***." He loves men not because men are lovable, but because He is a God of love. Selah!

Note: The LORD has **never** hardened the heart of an innocent man . . . of a pure, reasonable, honest, decent person that wants to be right with Him. It is not in His character to do so . . . "a bruised reed He will not break" (Isaiah 42:3). He gives grace to those who seek it . . . wisdom to those who ask Him for it . . . salvation to the one pursuing it by faith.

But, the sad fact of history is that there are none "*that seeketh after God*" for "*there is none that doeth good. No not one*." If a man seeks Him, it is because God placed that desire into his heart. Blessed be the Name of the Lord (Romans 3:10-13: Job 1:20-22).

Q: Is man responsible?

Romans 9:19-24 You will say to me then, "Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?" 20 But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me like this?" 21 Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honored use and another for dishonorable use? 22 What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, 23 in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory-

24 even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? 25 As indeed he says in Hosea, "Those who were not my people I will call my people."

Let's take **a look at the structure of the apostle's argument**:

First, Paul asks, "Why does God find fault" or "Is man responsible?" He then deliberates two points: (1) the issue of credentials to ask such a question (9:20a), and (2) the issue of creation which contain the rights of the Creator over His creation (9:20b-21).

Next, the apostle discusses two possible pre-destinations (9:22-14): (1) vessels prepared for destruction (9:22), and (2) vessels prepared for glory (9:23-24).

In asking the question, "Why does He find fault?" Paul discerns a spirit of pride. "Who O man, do you think you are?" A "why" question demands accountability, and God is accountable to no man! It's really the wrong question. Like a good lawyer, Paul answers a question with a question, "Who are you. O man, to answer back to God?"

Man calling the Judge to account for His decisions? What arrogance! *A man of dust cross-examining the eternal God?* ***Just who do you think you are*** to question the all-knowing, all-good, all-wise, all-powerful Creator to hold Himself accountable to the likes of little ol' you -- a man of dust? *What are your credentials to ask such questions?* Even a man with a sack full of PHDs doesn't have the acumen to judge the Father. He is accountable to no man especially Dr. Know-it-Alls at the University of Big Heads.

Second, the apostle directs us to the creative rights of God. Doesn't the author and creator of a thing have all rights over his invention?

Will the molded say to the molder, "***Why have you made me thus?"*** It is a proud question because it presumes the created object is equal to the creator. As Creator of all things, He has rights over that which He makes. The Potter-Clay illustration is really a reduction ad absurdum argument because Paul traces the implication of the question to its logical conclusion. In creating the clay pot, the Potter retains all rights over the vessel; and, the vessel has no qualifications or authority to question the Potter's purpose. Likewise, the fact of election is wrapped in God's creative purpose for His creatures and the creature has no authority to question the Creator!

Next, the apostle asks a "*What if . . . question*" designed to probe the audiences' understanding of reality. We are finite beings with limited knowledge of God. Paul, therefore, seeks to enlarge metaphysical possibilities and to expand the thinking of his readers.

Could it be, asks the apostle, t*hat God created some vessels for wrath and others for glory*? Wrath is a virtue of Almighty God. Could the Potter create a vessel to expose and testify to the virtue of His wrath and patience?

(1) Doesn't the presence of evil men in our time demonstrate the patience of God? In the end, they will be used as cannon fodder to authenticate His wrath.

(2) On the other hand, there are vessels prepared for glory, "***even us***" says the apostle (24). What can God's mercy and compassion produce? Well, look at the Christian community formed out of believing Jews and Gentiles. God has taken vile, shameless, despicable sinners hell-bent on exploiting every vice, convicted them of their sin, and saved them by the work of His Son. Look at the marvelous transformation of sinners—a testament to the grace and goodness of God. Is God unjust for preparing luscious culinary dishes to be enjoyed by men of faith in the banquet we call the kingdom of God? "***May it never be***," declared Paul (14).

(3) Finally, notice with me the two verbs for "***prepared***" in verses 22-23. There are two different words. The first is in the passive voice and the later in the active voice. The vessels of wrath are being prepared (passive voice) for destruction; God, on the other hand, prepared (active voice) certain vessels for glory. *The active voice* informs us that the subject of the verb is doing the action; *the passive voice* informs us that the subject is the object of action and voluntarily receives the motion of the verb. Thus, the use of the active voice in reference to the vessels of mercy inform us that God is the active Savior, the One doing the saving; *the passive voice informs us that the subject is being acted upon*, the vessels of wrath, and that they appear to be willfully receiving their appointment.

There is a story of an atheist who dared God to strike him dead in five minutes. The audience nervously waited. At the end of five minutes, he said, "You see, there is no God." After the talk, two coeds were talking wherein one asked the other what he thought about the speaker's proof there is no God. The other said, "*No, he didn't prove there was no God. He just proved even an arrogant bast**d like him can't exhaust the patience of God in five minutes*."

In conclusion, **the apostle exalts the sovereignty of God in salvation**. He is **not** unjust for saving some and not saving others. *Salvation is of God, not man*. If you are a Christian, your heart should be exploding with profound thankfulness; if you are not a believer, I would think your heart should be filled with fear. You are, after all, responsible for your own soul.

36. The Five Solas

Ephesians 2:8-9

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast." - Ephesians 2:8-9

The verb ***"have been saved"*** *(sesosmenoi)* is a passive particle meaning God is the One doing the saving. The focus is on His work by grace, not on a change in man's wretched heart.

_____

The contest between God and man, Cain and Abel, the true Gospel and a fake gospel rages on. It has many titles: Calvinism v. Armenianism; Reformation Theology v. Catholic Theology; and, Christianity v. Judaism.

Whether this battle is couched in terms between Armenians and Calvinists or Catholics and the Reformers, the cause of the conflict is always the same.

Q: Is the work of Christ at Calvary sufficient to save a man or must man add something to the sacrifice to activate salvation?

There is something about man that has difficulty accepting the pure grace of God.

Mankind seems hardboiled on substituting beans for blood (Genesis 4) . . . building steps up to God's altar (Exodus 20:26). . . offering strange fire to God (Leviticus 10:1-2) . . . wearing wool and sweating with the sacrifice (Ezekiel 44:18) . . . adding a catalyst to ignite grace . . . synergizing his own works with the works of Christ to claim salvation.

It is the duty of Christians to call Lazarus forth and to unwrap the living from the grave clothes and to strip away the fig leaves belonging to Adam's race.

We need to do all we can to prevent ourselves from exchanging our birthright for a mess of porridge.

The stumbling block on the road to Zion seems to be over the word "***alone***."

The Roman Catholic Church has always believed, and still do, ***that men are justified by grace through faith in Christ.*** What Rome does **not** believe is that justification is by grace alone, through faith alone, because of Christ alone.

According to Rome, *faith must be activated through love*; faith must produce works that please God; and, that man must change in order to be accepted by God. How much change, nobody knows.

Biblical Christians insist that Christ is the Great Savior that saves man from his sins (Matthew1:21); that salvation is of the Lord (Jonah 2:9); that His work on the cross is sufficient to save those who believe. He is **not** the greater Helper that assists men to produce life changes that causes God to accept man.

Those Pretenders wearing the figs leaves of Adam include in part Catholics, Arminians, Amish, Mennonites, General Baptists, Free Will Baptists, the majority of pew-sitting Southern Baptists, First Christian Churches, the Churches of Christ, the Seventh-day Adventist Churches, the Nazarenes, the Salvation Army, and the Wesleyan Methodists. We would call them all "good people" in contrast to Sodomites and Lesbians.

It is this word "***alone***" that seems to start a bar room brawl. The word "***alone***" in Latin is the word *sola*. The emphasis on Sola Scriptura, Sola Fide, Solus Christus, Sola Gratia, and Sola Dei Gloria ignited the fires of the Reformation.

Dr. James White states the conflict so well,

> *"The issue has never been the necessity of grace. It has always been the sufficiency of grace!"*

The great question is and always has been about sufficiency.

Catholics insist Calvary is *necessary* for justification; but, but the Reformers insisted that faith in the cross is *sufficient* for man's salvation.

Let's take a look closer look at the Five Solas:

Sola Scriptura:

Biblically educated Christians insist the Holy Scriptures are sufficient for faith and practice. The Pretenders believe that "all truth is God's truth;" that the Christian can rely upon the canons of the church, dreams, voices, revelations, religious experiences, psychology, and academic disciplines to build up a holy faith that pleases God.

The Reformers said no to these adhesions and insisted that Scripture alone is the inspired Word of God and the infallible rule of faith for the Church of Jesus Christ. Religious experiences and feelings are not to be trusted (Isaiah 8:19-20; 2 Timothy 3:15-17).

Solo Christo or Solus Christus:

Biblically taught believers understand that Christ is the Savior, the only Savior, and that men are saved by the doing and dying of Christ; that faith in His life and death is all that is needed for a man to gain acceptance before God; that no amount of change or assistance from another can save the soul. It is not Christ plus something else. His blood alone cleanses the moral leper. He "is the way, the truth, and the life, no man comes to the Father" except through Him (John 14:6; Matthew 1:21; Romans 5:8; I Peter 1:18-20; 2:24;).

The Pretenders insist that man is not totally fallen; that he can lift himself up by his own bootstraps; that he can open his own dead mind, blind eyes, and deaf ears to God; that prayers to Mary the "Mother of God," the holy saints "that hear us" assist in man's salvation; that the indwelling, regenerating Spirit of God that changes one's character is necessary in order to effect justification.

European people in the 16th century were drowning in a sea of idols trying to swim toward islands dedicated to minor deities called "the saints."

Even the young Luther, in 1505, in the midst of the thunderstorm that threatened his life, prayed to Saint Anne. As a lightning bolt struck just feet away from him, in fear of his life, he shouted, "Save me Saint Anne and I will become a monk." Saint Anne being the patron saint of miners, it seemed natural to him to pray to her to save him from impending death. But, his studies in the Scripture lead him to see Solus Christus and this delivered him from all the idols offered by Rome.

Sola Fide:

The Biblical mind believes a faith that looks outside of self to Christ and His work at Calvary is sufficient to save the soul. Like snake-bitten Israelites that had to take their eyes off their wounds, off their snake-bite potent, and off their snake-bite doctors and look at the brazen serpent in the middle of the camp to be healed, so the Christian looks away from all the Pretenders to Christ and Christ alone for salvation (Numbers 21; John 3:14).

While faith in Christ regenerates the soul, that change never becomes the basis of being justified by God. The believer has an anchor of soul in heaven that assures him that the faithfulness of Christ is totally sufficient to save his soul (Romans 3:21-22;4:1-5; 5:1; Hebrews 6:9).

The Pretenders seem quite busy erecting religious-industrial plants that manufacture traditions of men, human philosophies, high priest psychologists, clerical absolution, penances, indulgences, pilgrimages, prayer to the saints, rosaries, and charitable causes to assist man in his search for salvation. The Reformers threw these practices in the trash bin insisting on "Faith alone" as the means of salvation. It was not faith in the heart producing love that saved man, but faith in Christ and His work at Calvary that saved the soul.

Yes, men must believe in Christ to be saved; but, it is God that causes the blind man to see and the deaf man to hear. It is God that unchains the will from the shackles of sin freeing it to choose Christ.

Recently, a firefighter saved a wild rabbit from dying in a fire in Los Angeles and the media honored his compassion (12/7/2017). Was he unjust for not saving all the rabbits? If we used Armenian thinking, we would condemn the

firefighter because he didn't save the whole herd. Likewise, God is not unjust for saving some and not saving others.

Do not hear what is not being said. Sola fide is not faith in faith. The Christian man is not a fideist that believes without proof. Man is depraved. Sin has impacted all of his being, but sin does not make a man nonhuman or strip away his ability to look at the evidence and separate fact from fantasy. There is no room in true Christianity for blind faith or credulity. We follow the facts and the rules of logic. The Christian faith is grounded on the historical fact that Jesus died for our sins and literally, tangibly, physically rose from the grave. He is risen. You ask me how I know He lives, because eyewitnesses of his resurrection wrote what they saw, heard, felt, and touched for us to investigate and believe (1 John 1:1-4).

Sola Gratia:

The Reformers insisted that God provided all that was necessary to save believing men. They concluded that salvation was totally by grace apart from any contribution by man. They called it "sola gratia." They insisted that man was saved entirely by works – His works – by faith (a point of trust) in the doing (positive righteousness) and dying of Christ (payment for sin).

Sola Gratia was so important to the Reformers, they saw it as the pivotal truth that separated the true gospel from all the false gospels circulating in Europe.

The question is this: Is grace able to save or is it merely an aide with man's will being the final deciding factor?

The first use of grace is in Genesis 6:8 and the last use of the term is found in Revelation 22:21; that is, God's grace is the grand theme and conclusion of the Christian faith.

The Reformers preached grace – a grace that actually saves the soul. Sola gratia meant "grace at the start, grace to the end, grace in the middle, grace without fail, grace without mixture, grace without addition, grace that allows no boasting, grace that precludes all glorying but in the Lord" (Reformation Theology).

Our primary text states:

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

The Savior's work is summed up under the term "***grace***." Grace "***alone***" saves the soul. Faith is the way man receives salvation.

The verb "***have been saved***" (*sesosmenoi*) is a perfect passive participle. The perfect informs us of a past action with present results; that is, that the grace of God saved / saves the soul; that the believer was saved, is saved, and is now in

a state of enjoying that salvation. The passive voice informs us the subject of the sentence (*you*) is acted on by the passive verb. Grace saves the believing man!

It is here that we must understand the difference between ***monergism*** and ***synergism*** regarding salvation.

Monergism, which comes from a compound Greek word "mono" which means "*alone*" and "*ergism*" that means "*to work*." Thus, "*to work alone*," is the view that God alone affects our salvation. Synergism means "to work together." It refers to cooperation between two or more agents to produce the combined effect of salvation that could not be achieved by the sum of their individual efforts.

All the Reformers were ***monergists***, believing that God's grace is the provider of salvation enabling the blind to see and the deaf to hear so they can receive His salvation.

Catholics and Armenians are ***synergists*** believing man must do something to merit God's salvation; that is, man's choice is the ultimate, pivotal factor of salvation. These Pretenders believe grace is necessary for salvation; that it is one of the ingredients that bakes a happy cake, but they can't seem to grasp the sufficiency of grace; that *sola gratia* is sufficient to save the soul.

The consequences of this belief are stunningly negative. You can see this in society where even the secular mind is saying, "You are a product of your choices. Choose wisely." Have you ever seen a "Christian" t-shirt saying, *"I" chose Jesus!* Inadvertently, the emphasis is shifted from what Christ accomplished on the cross to what the individual must accomplish to have salvation. Wearing a t-shirt with the words "I" chose Jesus is a form of pride or bragging. Where are the t-shirts saying, "Jesus chose me?"

Thus, the reformed mind sees the doctrines of Armenians as a toll road leading pilgrims back to Rome.

These two views were heavily debated in the early 17th century when followers of Arminius published "The Five Articles of the Remonstrance" (FAR), a document stating where their theology differed from that of Calvin and his followers. See the Synod of Dort: Calvinism v. Armenianism.

The pivotal point in this debate is between the Calvinistic doctrine of unconditional election vs. the Arminian doctrine of conditional election. If one believes election is unmerited even unconditional, then one will tend toward a monergistic view of salvation. Conversely, if one holds to a view that election is based on God's foreknowledge of who would believe in Him, then one tends toward the synergistic view.

We see this tension in the early church. At the Jerusalem counsel in Acts 15:24 where a Jewish synergistic sect within the church sought to subvert souls,

> *"saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment" (24).*

Notice three important words:

The word "***subvert***" (*anaskeuazo*) means "to pack up baggage and to carry it to another place;" that is, these Judaizers sought to haul immature Christians back to the nest of Judaism.

The word "***must***" implies a necessity. The apostles believed in the necessity of faith (Acts 16:30). These Judaizers believe in another necessity besides the cross – *that circumcision needed to synergize with grace to affect salvation*.

Next, notice the word "***freely***" (*dorean*) in Romans 3:24 -

> *"Being justified **freely** (dorean) by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."*

"***Freely***" is the same word translated "*without cause*" in John 15:25 —

> *"they hated him without cause (dorean)."*

Pretenders don't believe in free grace. They insist man must do something to cause God to save the man. They insist there must be another cause that saves man outside of Calvary — a cause within man.

Pretenders look for a cause in man why God saves the man. The Reformers saw the cause of salvation resting in in God alone. He loves us not because of who we are or what we do, but because of Who He is – a God of love (1 John 4:7ff).

> *"So then, it is not of him who wills or of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy," Romans 9:16.*
>
> *"But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace," Romans 11:6.*
>
> *"I am graven on the palms of His hands. I am never out of His mind. All my knowledge of Him depends on His sustained initiative in knowing me. I know Him, because He first knew me, and continues to know me. He knows me as a friend, One who loves me; and there is no moment when His eye is off me, or His attention distracted for me, and no moment, therefore, when His care falters." J.I. Packer*

Moreover, in the Armenian, Roman Catholic mind it is grace in the heart that saves man. Their emphasis, therefore, is upon change and transformation and being born again. The Reformers insisted the locus of grace was at Calvary . . . not the human heart. (See the Locus of Grace)

Moreover, Roman Catholics stumbled over the fact that God justifies the wicked when the wicked man seeks protection at the cross (Romans 4:5). In the Catholic mind, God can only justify the righteous. Only after the man is made righteous did God justify the man; that is, *regeneration became the basis of justification.* Not so with the Reformers. Regeneration was important to Reformers, but it was **not** the reason God saves men. Justification precedes regeneration; God declares a man right with God first (justification), and then precedes to make the man righteous second (regeneration) (See the Upside Down Gospel).

Note: this statement does not deny the fact the Spirit has to enlighten the man and prepare his heart to receive salvation which some Reformers call "regeneration." It is just not included in the definition of "regeneration."

See: A Test: Are you Roman Catholic or Protestant in your Theology?

Thus, *sola gratia* and *solie Deo gloria* became the rallying cry of the Reformers who sought to extract themselves from all the idols, formulas, and catalyst offered by Rome.

Soli Deo Gloria ("glory to God alone"):

Because Catholics lit thousands of candles to Mary and prayed to a plethora of dead saints in their search for salvation, people needed to awakened to the massive confusion caused by Medieval Catholicism The Reformers rediscovered the true gospel and taught *sola Scriptura, solus Chrisus, sola Fide, sola Gratia, and Sola Gloria* glorified God and not man.

God will not share His glory with another (Isaiah 48:11).

> *"For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should my name be polluted? and* ***I will not give my glory unto another****."*

In advocating the true Gospel of Grace man receives the benefits of salvation after he acted on by the Spirit, but God gets all the glory . . . *"that we might be to the praise of His glory"* (Ephesians 1:12).

While we are saved unto good works, we are not saved by our good works. Saved by grace, all service to Christ is rendered graciously and thankfully. *Service does not save us, but it does beautify us*. It is *esthetic*, **not** *pragmatic*.

Yes, Christians should obey Christ. Yes, Christians are committed to God's law-order. But, there is all the difference in the world between being saved by the law and being saved in order to keep the law. Reformed Christians are **not** antinomian!

The Five Solas apply to the judicial wonder of justification, being declared righteous and treated as such by the Court; that is, the day a man sees and believes that Christ is his substitute, Savior, and Lamb.

Sanctification, on the other hand, follows one's *justification* (Romans 3-5).

Justification is instantaneous. Sanctification is a life-long process of becoming holy in word and deed. In sanctification, a man cooperates with God in the pursuit of holiness (Romans 6-8; 12-16). There is ***nothing*** substitutionary about sanctification. It is not "let go" and "let God." Justification rests on the substitutionary work of God at the cross for man alone; sanctification requires the regenerate man's effort to be holy while he seeks the power of the Spirit to be holy. The Reformers separated justification from sanctification and insisted that sanctification is not the basis of justification.

The *Catholic Counter-reformation* could not separate *justification* from *sanctification*. Thus, sanctification (being made holy) became the foundation of justification (the hope of being declared holy some day).

The question that could not be answered was, "How holy does a man have to be to be declared just before God? The Reformers, of course, saw Christ as their righteousness.].

Thus, Biblical minds advance **the Five Solas** because the Lord and the Lord alone is exalted in the progress of redemption. Armenians and Charismatics side with Rome seeking a place for man on the Victor's Stand. While they bow a knee to Christ, the Reformers fell on both knees before their Champion. The Pretenders use Him as a crutch; those who understand Sola Gratia see Christ as their whole wheel chair.

Figure 1: Vikayatskina Free license

37. The Locus of Grace

The locus of God's grace is not the human heart, but Calvary.

Christians error when they think that God's work of grace begins in the human heart. If the human heart is the locus of salvation, then man will be pre-occupied with energies within and therefore enslaved to wretched subjectivism.

First and foremost, grace is something outside of man – wonderful accomplishments at the cross – the force and power of God that delivers men from power of sin and the vortex of subjectivism.

Grace is the gift of God's Son and His work for lost sinners revealed at Calvary.

By this, we are **not** saying that God does not give sanctifying grace or that He does not graciously change the heart. ***We are saying that grace is fundamentally the work of God at the cross*** [Romans 3:24].

The heart of the gospel is that God heals the man who looks outside of himself to the Serpent lifted up on the cross (John 3:14); that is, healing from the serpent's poison comes to those who look away from slithering snakes around them, their snake bite punctures, the snake bite doctors, their snake bite potions, and to look to Christ and His accomplishments as the remedy for sin.

See the Ecstasy of St. Teresa at Wikepedia or other sites.

Roman Catholicism [RC] made the heart, not the cross, the primary locus of grace.

In the RC system, grace is needed to change the heart so Christ can work through the man to produce works pleasing to God:

> *" . . . the just will persevere in grace and merit eternal life" [Fifteen Promises of the Blessed Virgin, No. 6], and "Every work of grace, every increase of grace, is a work of the Holy Spirit" [Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the Rosary].*

When men shift the locus of grace from the cross to the heart, they place emphasis on the "new birth" as the means of salvation instead of the work of redemption at Calvary as the means of salvation.

Men are saved, not because they change, but because Christ died for them. When men believe in Jesus, they do change, but that change is **not** the basis of salvation.

Q: If change were the basis of salvation, you must ask, "*How much do you have to change?"*

A: There is never enough change to merit salvation in any one of us. This is why the gospel directs are attention to the cross -- to the perfect one who died for our sins at Calvary.

The great work of God is at the cross; secondarily, His work in the human heart through regeneration.

The Spirit ALWAYS turns men away from self to view the wonder of cross, from looking "inside" to looking outside themselves to brazen serpent, our precious Lord and His work [John 3:14-15].

An Illustration of Grace

When a person works and receives compensation for work, this is called a ***wage***.

When a person wins a race and receives a prize, this is called a trophy. When a person performs a great achievement and is honored for it, this is called an ***award***.

But when a person is not capable of earning a wage, or winning a prize, or deserving of an award--yet receives such a gift anyway -- that is ***grace***.

Source: Stockton, "NT Theology Lecture Notes," Five Pillars of the Gospel (https://nikeinsights.famguardian.org/publications/) or (https://sedm.org/Forms/17-Theology/FivePillarsOfTheGospel.pdf)

38. Synod of Dort

The Origin of Armenianism and Calvinism

Calvinism v. Armenianism

Since the Armenians (a.k.a. "Arminians") wanted the Dutch Reformed Church to adopt their articles for their standard of faith, they were demanding that the Scripture must be interpreted to teach the following:

(a) That man is never so corrupted by sin that he cannot believe the gospel when it is placed before him; that

(b) man is never so controlled by God that he cannot reject the gospel;

(c) God's election of men is prompted by his knowledge that men will believe the gospel based on their own willing accord (this is ratification, not election);

(d) Christ did not die exclusively for the elect but for all men in order to create a possibility for all men to be saved;

(e) it is the duty of believers to keep themselves in the state of grace by keeping up their faith or they will be lost.

The church, therefore, called for a national senate to discuss the Remonstrance of which forty-six ministers had signed. They met in November 1618 which was called the Senate of Dort. It consisted of eighty-four members and eighteen secular commissioners.

Out of the 84 scholars, 58 were Dutch, the others were foreigners from England and Europe. They conducted 154 sessions and concluded in May 9th, 1619. The first official business was the taking of the oath:

> *I promise before God, in whom I believe, and whom I worship, as being present in this place, and as being the Searcher of all hearts, that during the course of the proceedings of this Synod, which will examine and decide not only the five points and all the differences resulting from them but also any other doctrine, I will use no human writing, but only the word of God, which is an infallible rule of faith. And during all these discussions, I will only aim at the glory of God, the peace of the Church, and especially the preservation of the purity of doctrine. So help me, my Savior, Jesus Christ! I beseech him to assist me by his Holy Spirit! (Klooster 57) (Spindleworks.com).*

The goal was to examine *the Five Points the Arminians* had presented, and only the Scripture could be used as authority.

Simon Episcopus, a student of Arminius, wanted to speak. The Arminians chose officers, intending to present themselves as a kind of counter-synod. They would deal with Synod as a party in the controversy, after which the Government, with the advice of the foreign delegates, would give its verdict.

Their main line of defense would be to attack the Contra-Remonstrants as blasphemous fanatics, concentrating on the supralapsarian[4] and the ideas of Gomarus.

But, Episcopus wanted to begin with a refutation of the doctrines of Calvin in hope of prejudicing the entire assembly. But, the assembly demanded Episcopus give Scriptural support in favor of his group's opinions. The Arminians refused.

The Arminians refused to answer questions, refused to submit studies, refused to use Scripture, refused to submit copies of their positions, and then denied authority of the synod. The synod then asked them to submit their objections to the Belgian Confession in writing. They refused. Even when asked if the Remonstrance of 1610, they all remained silent.

On January 14, they refused to submit to the authority of the Synod and remained silent.

The leader of the Synod arose and spoke and said to the foreign delegates of this assembly that we are of the opinion that you are unworthy to appear before this synod. With an exhortation reflecting on the gentleness of the assembly

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[4] There was a difference of opinion between the infra-lapsarian and the supra-lapsarian members of Synod. The point at issue was the question: "Who is the object of election?" The Arminians taught the believer was, making faith the ground for election. All members of Synod rejected this. Infralapsarians, many of them foreign theologians, regarded fallen man as the object of God's election or reprobation.

and the stubbornness of the Arminians, the assembly dismissed the Arminians with prejudice.

> *The foreign delegates are now of the opinion that you are unworthy to appear before Synod. You have refused to acknowledge it as your lawful judge and regarded it as an opposing party: you have tried in everything to have your own way; you have despised the decision of Synod and of the political commissioners; you refused to answer questions; you declared the credentials to be invalid. Synod has treated you with gentleness, but you have been lying from beginning to end, as one of the foreign theologians remarked. With this eulogy we will let you go. God will keep his word and he will bless the Synod. In order that we will not be delayed any longer, you will be sent out. Depart: Go! (Faber et al. 35) (spindleworks.com).*

The chairs and tables of the Arminians were picked up and put away.

The Synod now began to examine their opinions from available writings, concentrating on *the Five Articles of the Remonstrance of 1610*. The reading of the various judgments of the eighteen committees concerning these Five Articles took place from March 7 to March 21 and from March 25 to April 16. The Canons were formulated in ninety-three separate articles. These were signed by all the delegates on April 23, 1619, and solemnly promulgated in the Great Church on May 6 before a large congregation. Three days later, after six months of deliberation, the foreign divines departed, leaving the Dutch members to convene for another twenty-six sessions to deal with further national matters (Spindleworks.com)[5].

The Synod then took the five points, studied them, and then refuted them with the Word of God. This is how they came up with the five points, TULIP . . . and this was developed long after Calvin was dead.

Summarily, Calvinism is known by an acronym: T.U.L.I.P.

- **T**otal Depravity (also known as Total Inability and Original Sin)

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[5] The Synod of Dort has been labelled the "persecuting Synod." It is quite true that two hundred Remonstrant ministers were deposed from their office. Of these, a total of eighty were banished, nearly seventy agreed to be silenced and refrain from their ministry, and forty, upon conforming to the decisions of Synod, were restored to their office. It is also true that the political leaders of the Remonstrants were arrested. Van Oldenbarnevelt, declared guilty of treason, was beheaded on May 14, 1619. This prompted the grim joke from Diodati, the delegate from Geneva, that "the Canons of Dort had shot off the Advocate's head" (Dewar 115). But, the error of those who advocated and practised what would now be considered persecution was a general error of the age.

- **U**nconditional Election
- **L**imited Atonement (also known as Particular Atonement)
- **I**rresistible Grace
- **P**erseverance of the Saints (also known as Once Saved Always Saved)

DeWitt was adamant in his judgment of Arminius and his successors:

> *Arminius and his successors were oath breakers; and to avoid the consequences of this offence, they in effect withdrew themselves from the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical courts, while claiming to continue as faithful members of the Church, and placed themselves under the protection of the secular power, (p. 10).*

DeWitt went on to say that a man is rarely honest enough to withdraw himself, if his views become incompatible with the confessions of the church, but instead attempts, "by means of a strange line of casuistical reasoning," to convert the church to his own understanding of the truth (deWitt.10). (The Doctrines of Grace and the Canons of Dordrecht, p. 28).

It is the same today. Instead of seeking the truth, people want you to adopt their spurious views on all matters of subjects regardless if they represent Scripture or not.

In 1619, if you were an Arminian, you were a heretic. In our day, if you are a Calvinist, you are heretic. Arminianism is now the standard doctrine taught in the church and in government schools.

Spurgeon once said,

> *It is often said that the doctrines we believe have a tendency to lead us to sin. I have heard it asserted most positively, that those high doctrines which we love, and which we find in the Scriptures, are licentious ones. I do not know who will have the hardihood to make that assertion, when they consider that the holiest of men have been believers in them. I ask the man who dares to say that Calvinism is a licentious religion, what he thinks of the character of Augustine, or Calvin, or Whitefield, who in successive ages were the great exponents of the system of grace; or what will he say of the Puritans, whose works are full of them? Had a man been an Arminian in those days, he would have been accounted the vilest heretic breathing, but now we are looked upon as the heretics, and they as the orthodox. (http://www.spurgeon.org/calvinis.htm).*

A trite observation: "The Calvinists emphasize the Sovereignty of God and Arminians emphasize the Freewill of man." Hogwash! Calvinists teach the responsibility of man also. The difference is not one of emphasis, but one of content. Either God saves man or man saves himself. Either salvation is by God

or salvation is by man! When an Arminian teaches on justification it ends up being salvation by works.

The Arminians taught man's will was totally free and capable of receiving the gospel and choosing salvation. The Calvinists did not deny that life was a series of choices, but they correctly observed that man's will is not without its biases, prejudices, leanings, and desires; that is, man's will was totally enslaved to the muscle and might of sin at work in the sinner (R.C. Sproul: Why We Can't Choose God)

The true gospel is Calvinism. We can't preach the gospel unless we preach Calvinism because Calvinism is the gospel! Unless we preach the sinfulness of man and the glorious grace of God to send his Son to die for sinners, we aren't preaching the gospel. Spurgeon declared,

> *I do not believe we can preach the gospel, if we do not preach justification by faith, without works; nor unless we preach the sovereignty of God in His dispensation of grace; nor unless we exalt the electing, unchangeable, eternal, immutable, conquering love of Jehovah; nor do I think we can preach the gospel, unless we base it upon the special and particular redemption of His elect and chosen people which Christ wrought out upon the cross; nor can I comprehend a gospel which lets saints fall away after they are called, and suffers the children of God to be burned in the fires of damnation after having once believed in Jesus. Such a gospel I abhor.*
>
> *"If ever it should come to pass,*
> *That sheep of Christ might fall away,*
> *My fickle, feeble soul, alas!*
> *Would fall a thousand times a day."*
>
> *"If one dear saint of God had perished, so might all; if one of the covenant ones be lost, so may all be; and then there is no gospel promise true, but the Bible is a lie, and there is nothing in it worth my acceptance. I will be an infidel at once when I can believe that a saint of God can ever fall finally. If God hath loved me once, then He will love me forever" (Reasonable Theology).*

Arminianism is another gospel of Christ, but it is a heresy because it is subtle, plausible, and popular.

(Source: Stockton, "Five Pillars of the Gospel", unpublished seminary lecture notes for New Testament Theology)

39. Test

Are you Roman Catholic or Protestant in your Theology?

This is a test I found in Verdict Magazine. I used it to test students to see if the thought like a Catholic or a Reformer.

Answer (a) or (b) whichever you think is most Biblically correct?

One:

(a) God gives a man right standing with Himself by mercifully accounting him innocent and virtuous

(b) God gives a man right standing with Himself by actually making him into an innocent and virtuous person.

Two:

(a) God gives a man right standing with Himself by placing Christ's goodness and virtue to his credit.

(b) God gives a man right standing with Himself by putting Christ's goodness and virtue into his heart.

Three:

(a) God accepts the believer because of the moral excellence found in Jesus Christ.

(b) God makes the believer acceptable by infusing Christ's moral excellence into his life.

Four:

(a) If a Christian becomes "born again" (regenerate and transformed in character); he will achieve a right standing with God.

(b) If a Christian has a right standing with God by faith, he will experience a transformation in character.

Five:

(a) We achieve a right standing with God by faith alone.

(b) We receive a right standing with God by faith which has become active by love.

Six:

(a) We achieve right standing with God by having Christ live out His life of obedience in us.

(b) We achieve a right standing with God by accepting the fact that He obeyed the law perfectly for us.

Seven:

(a) We achieve a right standing with God by following Christ's example by the help of His enabling grace.

(b) We follow Christ's example because His life has given us right standing with God.

Eight:

(a) God first pronounces that we are good in His sight, then gives us His Spirit to make us good.

(b) God sends His spirit to make us good, and then He will pronounce that we are good.

Nine:

(a) Christ's intercession at God's right hand gives us favor in the sight of God.

(b) It is the indwelling Christ that gives us favor in God's sight.

Ten:

(a) Only by faith in the doing and dying of Christ can we fully satisfy the claims of the Ten Commandments.

(b) We can satisfy the claims of the Ten Commandments by the power of the Holy Spirit. [1]

Source: (Questionaire: Are you Catholic or Protestant? Brinsmead, "Verdict Magazine," a.k.a. "Present Truth," circa 1972)

_____

Catholicism and Justification

The first open challenge in the Church to salvation by grace was by Pelagius (about A.D. 400)[2], a British monk who denied original sin. He proposed that man was able to live a holy life by the natural powers given him of God, and thus obtain salvation.

Augustine of Hippo (354-430) vigorously opposed Plagiarism and catechized the orthodox view of man's depravity and need of divine grace.

In a series of councils the Catholic Church united with Augustine. Augustine championed the doctrine of salvation by grace alone. Within the Church, others arose to oppose Augustinian theology by proposing views which became known

as semi-Plagiarism—a belief that man is tainted with sin but not to the point he cannot work with God to accomplish his own salvation; that is, semi-Pelagianism taught partial depravity. The councils of the Church even condemned semi-Pelagianism. Catholic authors cite these facts of history in an effort to demonstrate how the Church has always stood by the New Testament teaching of salvation by grace.

> *"St. Paul tells us that we are 'justified freely by his grace, and that we are 'saved according to the election of grace, and if by grace it is not now by works: otherwise grace is no more grace'. To the Corinthians, he writes: 'By the grace of God I am what I am', and speaks to the Ephesians of 'Christ, by whose grace you are saved . . . for by grace you are saved . . . and that not of yourselves, for it is the gift of God'. He reminds Timothy that 'God has called me by his holy calling, not according to our own works, but according to his own purpose and grace'. And again: 'To every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the giving of Christ'. The same Apostle writes to Titus: 'That being justified by his grace, we may be heirs according to the hope of life everlasting'. and again to the Ephesians that God has predestinated us unto the praise of the glory of his grace, in which he hath graced us in his beloved Son'." (Daujat, 1959).*

The Council of Trent (1545-1563), in reaction to the Protestant Reformation, declared:

> *" . . . if they [men] were not born again in Christ, they would never be justified, since in that new birth there is bestowed upon them, through the merit of His passion, the grace by which they are made just . . . "*

The editors of the Roman Catholic Douay Version make these footnote comments on Romans 3 and 4:

> *"The justification of which St. Paul here speaks is the infusion of sanctifying grace which alone renders a person supernaturally pleasing in the sight of God." "But justification, that is, an infusion of sanctifying grace, cannot be merited by us; it is an entirely gratuitous gift of God."*

In The Life of Grace, P. Gregory Stevens writes the following:

> *"What is the reality of the justification accorded by God when man cooperates in faith? Is it merely like a statement of God declaring the sinner just? Or is it a divine act by which the sinner is internally transformed and becomes a new reality before God? Catholic thought has always been that the justice bestowed on man is a gratuitous gift (Gal. 3.6ff), and a true justice which actually transforms man into a person pleasing to God."*

"Catholic doctrine on these questions, formulated in opposition to Lutheranism, was presented in full at the Council of Trent, as it had been previously by Pope Leo X in the Bull 'Exsurge Domine' of June 15, 1520. The teaching of Trent centers on two points of fundamental importance for the understanding of the Catholic doctrine on grace. First of all, justification is a real and profound transformation of man, a genuine gift of sanctification to him. It can in no way be reduced to something purely external." (Stevens, 1963)

"In a clear, religiously profound statement the Council defines the inner nature and structure of justification. It does so in direct opposition to the extrinsecist position of Reformation theology. The heart of Catholic teaching is contained in this passage. First of all comes the assertion that "justification is not only the remission of sins, but sanctification and renovation of the interior man through the voluntary reception of grace and the gifts, whereby man becomes just instead of unjust, a friend instead of an enemy, that he may be an heir in the hope of life everlasting." The Council then details the causes of this inner transformation: its goal and purpose is God's glory; it is brought about by God through the merits of our Redeemer, and communicated to man in faith and baptism."

Jesuit spirituality was a counter-reformation movement initiated by Ignatius Loyola who paid attention to divine voices inside him. He believed God is present within every man and man need only listen to him.

Richard McBrien wrote this about Catholicism:

"To be "spiritual" means to know, and to live according to the knowledge, that there is more to life than meets the eye. To be "spiritual" means, beyond that, to know and to live according to the knowledge that God is present to us in grace as the principle of personal, interpersonal, social and even cosmic transformation. To be "open to the Spirit" is to accept explicitly who we are and who we are called always to become and to direct our lives accordingly."

Jesuit (or Ignatian) spirituality mirrors that of **Ignatius Loyola** (1491-1556), the founder of the Society of Jesus. It is a way of encountering ourselves and the world that encourages us to find God in everyone and everything (Jesuit website, Albuquerque, NM retrieved December 2013).

The Jesuits lead their followers into retreats and meditation wherein the God-seeker waits and listens for a voice within; that is, he seeks a spiritual experience that defines who he is and how he stands with God. This experience is more authoritative, more powerful, and more influential than the Scriptures

or the gospel. It is the worst kind of subjectivism because it does not need the Bible. Who needs the Bible when God speaks to you directly?

See Bernini's Portrayal of the Ecstasy of Saint Theresa. Notice the arrow piercing her heart. Theresa has had a dynamic, sensual experience with God that has overwhelmed her soul—an experience more authoritative than the resurrection of Christ or his written Word. This is Catholicism: deeply subjective, sensual, experiential, emotional, orgasmic, intuitive and introspective . . . and it leads to hell.

A Summary of the Catholic Position on Justification

Justification is the internal renovation and renewing of a man, i.e., wretched subjectivism confused as human sanctification.

Justification comes by an infusion of God's grace. Man is justified on the basis of what the Holy Spirit has done in him.

Justification means that man himself is made just; i.e., made pleasing to God in his own person.

In common street terms, Catholic justification may be expressed this way: When God's acts on a vile sinner, God pours his grace into the heart of man changing him in such a way that he can be just before God.

A sincere Catholic may say: "I am a sinner. I cannot save myself. I need Jesus to come into my heart to save me, change me, and help me to be good so I can be just in God's sight; that is, I need God's grace to make me 'born again' so I can change and please God." Jean Daujat (The Theology of Grace) said it this way:

"Sinful man cannot, of himself, be pleasing to God. For that, he must receive a gift from God which transforms him interiorly, cleanses him and sanctifies him by adorning him with qualities that render him pleasing to his Creator." (Daujat, 1959)

If we cannot see what is wrong with the above brief on the Catholic doctrine of justification by faith, then it is because we have become good Catholics.

Consequently, we need to develop a Biblical understanding of the doctrine of justification by faith and contrast it with Catholicism. Catholicism is all about the religious experience of man to the neglect of the sufficient, saving work of Christ at Calvary to save sinners. Catholicism is about the work "in me," and evangelical Christianity is all about the work of God "outside of me" in history through Christ.

[1] All the answers are A. except questions 4, 6, 7.

[2] Pelagius was a monk who lived in the late 300s and early 400s A.D. Pelagius taught that human beings were born innocent, without the stain of original or

inherited sin. He believed that God created every human soul directly and therefore every human soul was originally free from sin.

(Source: Stockton, "Five Pillars of the Gospel", unpublished seminary lecture notes for New Testament Theology)

40. Think Grace

Figure 10: Freepik

Romans 6:11 Likewise reckon (think this way) ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Titus 2:11-12 "For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age"

Hebrews 4:16 "Let us then approach God's Throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

Appropriating grace changes the Christian forever.

How does a person impacted by the grace of God at Calvary think?

1. As a justified, regenerated man, I am dead to sin. Baptized into Christ, I am alive to God. Identified with Him, I share in the benefits of His death, burial, and resurrection. Think position. Claim your status in the family of God.
2. I come to a throne of grace. Because it is a throne of grace I trust Christ will overlook the many defects lingering within my soul, and the defects of my weak prayers. Grace is the incense that makes my prayers acceptable to God. Hear my prayers and interpret my groans.
3. Law is good. I am saved in order to have power to keep the law. Grace is good. It is not permissive. Life under grace teaches me to say "No" to ungodliness. But, what if I fail?
4. When I fail to imitate Christ in all things, I must rely upon grace to restore my soul: grace to confess my sin, grace to fully repent, grace to make

restitutions, grace to apply the blood of Christ and the washing of His Word to my troubled conscience, grace to walk in peace and love again.

5. I am loved, not because of who I am, but because of Who He is — a God of love [1 John 4:8ff].

6. As to my past life, it does not exist before God: I died with Christ at Calvary, and I am now alive to God in Christ [Romans 6:9-11]. My future is glorious because I now share in the life of Christ.

7. I am not on probation: I am not out on parole. I am not in danger of losing my freedom because freedom is not conditioned upon my performance.

8. Grace once extended to me will not be retracted because of me. God knows all about me. He loves me, not because of Who I am, but because of Who He is—a God of love.

9. Even if I give God my very best, I am still unworthy of His grace. His grace is independent of me, and it is not dependent on what I do or do not do.

10. His grace is not bestowed because of human merit, nor is it withdrawn because of human failure. Otherwise, grace would no longer be grace.

11. My enjoyment of grace is totally dependent on my faith. When I believe, I really enjoy God's grace. When I am humble and consent to be love, I am enjoying grace; when I am proud and demand a reason to be loved, I am despising grace [Romans 15:13].

12. I must not look within for a reason why God loves me. I must look outside of myself, at Calvary, to discern the reason why God loves me. The reason I am loved is within the heart of God, and not because of some talent or virtue within me.

13. Because I am enriched by grace, I have stopped trying to do something to earn God's love. The great secret of the Christian life is to allow myself to be loved knowing that I am unworthy of His love!

14. Because I am enriched by God's grace, I have stopped looking inside myself for reasons why God should love me. The deepest theology that I know is that, "Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so."

15. I am learning that God's work outside me at the cross is the reason God loves me. My greatest need is to look at Calvary to understand the height, and length, and depth of God's infinite love, that is, "to know the love of Christ that passes knowledge" [Ephesians 3:19].

16. Because God always loves me, I have stopped judging circumstances as evidence of His love. His chastisements are not indicators of a change in

God's disposition toward me, nor are comfortable circumstances indicators of His acceptance and approval. Both His chastisement and comforts are evidence of his attentive care toward me [Hebrews 12;5ff].

17. God's love is not defined by my circumstances. His love is defined by Who He is—a God of love. What He does flows from His character. I must not judge God by my present condition, but by His eternal revelation -- the Word of God.

18. Because I am under grace, I must stop seeking God's blessings. I must identify them and begin to give thanks for them. I cannot be more blessed because He has already blessed me with every spiritual blessing I heavenly places [Ephesians 1:3]. I will not be more blessed if I obey more; but, if I obey, I will enjoy His blessings more. If I am going through a difficult time, it does not mean that I am loved less. I must learn to believe God loves me even though trials surround me.

19. Afflictions are good for me. "Before I was afflicted, I went astray" [Psalm 119:67].

20. Because I am graciously loved, I must stop looking for material blessings as the sign of God's love to me. God's blessings in the age of grace are spiritual [Ephesians 1:3]. Having physical things is not an indication of God's favor any more than a lack of material things is an indication of His disfavor.

21. Because I am smothered in grace, I can stop worrying about myself; however, I have many concerns about others.

22. Because my life has been so richly impacted by grace, I must serve God, not because it is imperative that I do so, but because it is what thankful people do. Every response rendered by me must spring from my acceptance before God or it quickly degenerates into legalism—efforts to be accepted. It is not a necessity to serve God [legalism]. It is a privilege to serve God [grace]. Charity, not the command, is my primary motivation for service. Thankfulness inspires my actions.

23. Legalists serve out of necessity; gracious souls serve out of generosity. Legalists are obliged to produce good deeds because God is the Judge. Souls impacted by grace obey God's law because they understand His commands originate from His sovereignty and love. Jesus is our Lord and Savior. If I serve narrowly out the imperative, I am motivated by the fear of punishment. But, perfect love casts out fear [1 John 4:18]. I need to hate sin more, and I need to esteem Christ more. If I love Him, I will obey Him. If I obey Him out of love, grace fuels the fires of devotion.

24. Service must spring from a grateful heart or it is not grace.

25. Because God loves out of His character, I must love out of my character. Just as God loves from Who He is and not because of who others are, I must learn to love others, not because of what they can do for me, but because of who I am—the one whom Jesus loves. I love out of who I am and what I am becoming, a person of love.

26. I seek to be a pious, holy man, not to be justified, but to be sanctified; not to be right with God, but because I am right with God (in grace). I keep the law, not to be saved, but because I am saved. Because God has given me His Spirit, I now have the power to obey the law and do what is right. If I fail, His grace at work within restores my soul.

27. I now serve the Lord with humility, not because I am better than other people, but because His love has not been withdrawn because of my many failures. Service is not a necessity for me. It is a great privilege for me. By the grace of God I have a ministry.

28. God has delivered me from wretched subjectivism because He shows me His Son and His accomplishment at cross on my behalf.

Cruci Dum Spiro Fido

Source: NT Theology, "Five Pillars of the Gospel."

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